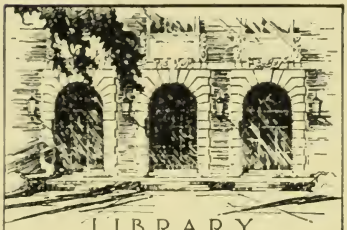
Two Pinches of Snuff

William Westall



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TWO PINCHES OF SNUFF.

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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TWO PINCHES OF SNUFF.

CHAPTER I.

A NEW LIGHT.

Veerelst, so deeply absorbed in thought that he hardly heeded what was going on around him, followed the other men mechanically into the dining-room. Herr Roth's evidence, though its meagreness had visibly disappointed the judge, was an unspeakable surprise for him, a thunderstroke, the import and significance of which he was vainly trying to grasp.

Two pinches of snuff! His brother had been the victim of one, and now poor Herr Roth was the victim of the other. The first had been the means of bringing

him to Dresden, the second might be the means of keeping him there—of what else time alone would tell. It could be no mere coincidence. The circumstances were too similar. And the snuff-box! It was scarcely conceivable that there could be two snuff-boxes like the one seen by his brother and that just described by Herr Roth. The man who forged the cheque was clearly the same that stole the bonds. Who could he be?

Jack had not mentioned to anybody at Dresden the incident of the forged cheque. He did not care to let Herr Roth or Anspach know that Hector had left Balder's bank otherwise than by his own free will, the more especially as he once heard the chief say that anybody who paid a forged cheque was a fool. Now he bitterly regretted his reserve, for had he told Herr Roth all about the affair the "old man"

would have been fore-armed, and when he saw the fateful snuff-box have known with whom he had to deal, and the mysterious forger and robber might now be safe under bolt and bar.

"Who can he be?" Jack asked himself for the twentieth time, and he went on repeating the question until his attention was diverted by hearing the judge inquire of the doctor what there could have been in the snuff to deprive Herr Roth so suddenly of his senses.

"There could be nothing in it to deprive him of his senses," said Siebold, decidedly.

"Well, but, dear Herr Doctor, did you not hear him say that after sneezing violently he remembered nothing more?" remarked the magistrate. "He was first stupefied with the snuff, and then

hit on the head with some blunt instrument—that is my theory."

"It is not mine though—at any rate as touching the snuff. A man cannot be stupefied by a pinch of snuff. There are poisons—cyanide of potassium, for instance—that, when swallowed, will kill almost as speedily as a bullet; but they could not be introduced into the stomach through the nostrils; the irritation produced on the mucous membrane would cause them to be instantly rejected in the act of sneezing. Even a handkerchief saturated with an anæsthetic and applied to the mouth and nostrils does not ordinarily produce insensibility for several minutes; how, then, could a pinch of snuff produce insensibility in a few seconds?"

"Herr Roth must be mistaken, then."

"In putting the snuff-taking and the

unconsciousness as cause and effect, he certainly is mistaken, and it is almost a matter of course that he should be mistaken. If a man puts something into his nose or his mouth and then falls down as if he had been shot, he naturally concludes—when he comes to himself—that the snuff, or whatever it may be, had a very close connection with the catastrophe."

"How was it, then? You say my theory is wrong, what is yours?" asked the Richter, rather impatiently. He did not like to be corrected even on points as to which he had no special knowledge.

"Well, you confound sequence with consequence. I am sure that a pinch of snuff cannot stun a man. I know that a blow on the head can, and the snuff being taken and the blow delivered almost simultaneously, it is an inevitable inference

that the insensibility was produced by the blow and not by the snuff."

"Do you think, then, Herr Doctor," put in Verelst, "that the snuff had nothing at all to do with it, and that the production of the box was a mere piece of purposeless caprice? If that is your opinion I cannot agree with you."

"Nor I," exclaimed the judge, who would have been glad to catch the doctor tripping. "I believe that snuff was drugged."

"So do I. It no doubt contained some powerful irritant, which set Herr Roth sneezing so violently that he could not see, and gave the robber an opportunity of striking, unperceived, that blow on the occiput, which must have produced immediate insensibility. So while Herr Roth has a clear recollection of the snuff and the sneezing, he knows nothing of that

crushing stroke on his head. The man you have to catch is no common thief, Herr Richter, and, so far as appears, he acted alone. Herr Roth is quite sure there was only one."

"But how do you know he had not a confederate waiting outside?" said the judge, with some asperity, for he never, save on compulsion, owned to a mistake, and the leading part which Siebold was taking in the conversation evidently fretted him. "I adhere to my previous opinion that at least two men—professional thieves—were engaged in the affair. I don't think any amateur could have carried it out so cleverly. I should not be surprised if they were Americans; and in that case they are, no doubt, on the other side of the Atlantic by this time."

"What makes you imagine that they are Americans?"

"Because when any particularly audacious robbery is committed, we generally find that an American is at the bottom of it. I am afraid, though, they have been too clever for us this time. The indications are so slight, and it is so long since the affair happened, that the chances of spotting them are extremely remote. However, we will do our best. I shall put the matter into the hands of the very best criminal investigator we have—if he will undertake it. The snuff-box may possibly afford a clue, though I candidly confess I don't see how. It was the only stupidity the fellow committed—showing a snuff-box like that, which could be so easily remembered and described. Why did he do it, I wonder?"

"I think I can guess why he did it," said Jack, thoughtfully. "It was to attract attention from himself. The more

Herr Roth looked at the snuff-box the less he would be likely to look at the owner. It was not the first time he practised the trick, either. I heard of that snuff-box before I came to Dresden, Herr Amtsrichter."

"That is extraordinary," said the doctor.

"How, when, where, Herr Verelst?" demanded the judge.

Jack told them the story of the forged cheque.

"Heaven and earth!" exclaimed the judge. "This is—this is the very devil. I never met with such a case in all my experience. And I am quite right, an American is at the bottom of it."

"Quite as likely to be an Englishman, I should say," returned Jack. "Did not Herr Roth fancy that the fellow

spoke with a foreign accent? And, so far as I know, my brother did not take him for anything but an Englishman."

"Well, Englishmen and Americans are pretty much the same, are they not? There is about as much difference between them as between pork and bacon. Yes, I was quite right, and I generally am right in matters of this sort. Your testimony, Herr Verelst, is of the highest importance. With your permission I will take it down. It may enable us to find a clue, and will probably lead to the discovery of the culprit."

"The probability is very slight, I fear, Herr Richter," observed Dr. Siebold, with a somewhat sarcastic smile. "If you are right about the man being a foreigner, he is a long way off by this time; and you will not find it so easy to put salt on his

tail as you think. And you have not discovered who he is yet."

"But we shall, we shall, Herr Doctor, and before very long, too; and if, as you suggest, the ruffian has fled to America or England, the Imperial Government will demand his surrender, and our Chancellor is not a man to be trifled with. And now, if you will give us your attention for a moment, Herr Verelst, my clerk will take down your evidence. Are you going, Herr Doctor? You will oblige me by observing strict silence concerning this episode of the pinch of snuff—you, and also Herr Verelst. I shall caution Frau Roth to the same effect. We do not know where the culprit is, or what may be his sources of information, and we must on no account put him on his guard. All that we have to say is that Herr Roth was struck on the head and rendered insensible by a well-

dressed man who was an entire stranger to him, and whom he would probably not recognize if he saw him again. Is it agreed? Do we understand each other?"

"I think so," said Siebold. "At any rate, you may be sure I shall say nothing. A doctor is in some measure a father-confessor, you know, and should be able to keep a secret as closely."

"And you, Herr Verelst?"

"You may be quite as sure that I shall say nothing. I am too anxious that this villain, who forges in Manchester and robs in Dresden, should be found out, to throw away a chance."

"I am glad to hear you say so. Do not mention it even in your correspondence—to your brother or anybody else. Things ooze out in a most extraordinary way sometimes. And there is no telling—the man may be in Manchester."

"I will mention it to nobody," returned Jack, "and then I am sure to be right. But how will you deal with the papers? They find everything out and keep nothing back."

"Leave that to me, my dear sir. The German press is not the English press. Our papers only say what they are told, and only such particulars about this case as I choose to give—and I do not think I shall give any—will be printed. And now, gentlemen, when we have taken our leave of Frau Roth I think our business will be over."

Siebold and Verelst left the house together.

"The Amtsrichter is a conceited beggar," said the former, "and a long way from being as wise as he thinks himself, and would have others believe; yet, all the same, he is no fool, and may possibly suc-

ceed in unravelling the mystery, though I doubt it."

"Who is the criminal investigator he spoke about? I suppose 'criminal investigator' is detective writ large."

"No doubt. I cannot tell you who he is. Detectives don't go about in uniform in this country. They personate all sorts of characters, but never by any chance that of a policeman, and keep their calling as secret as if it were something to be ashamed of."

"Well, I almost think it is. I don't think I should like to be a criminal investigator."

"Nor I," said the doctor. "All the same, it must be an interesting and exciting profession, and can be successfully followed only by men of some culture with a special aptitude for that sort of thing. It will require a clever

fellow, for instance, to unravel this mystery."

"So it will. Let us hope that the judge's criminal investigator will be equal to the occasion. Now we know that the scoundrel who forged the cheque is the would-be murderer of Herr Roth, I am more than ever anxious to find him out."

"Are you quite sure that the two crimes were committed by the same individual?" said Siebold. "You must remember that in criminal cases, as in scientific investigation, nothing is certain that cannot be proved."

CHAPTER II.

THE BLAZING LOG.

THE next day Jack had a call from Dr. Roydon, and taking it for granted that he had been to see Herr Roth, inquired what he thought of the case "now."

"I have not been yet; the fact is, I was rather out of sorts last night, and I knew that Siebold would do everything that was necessary," said Roydon. "Have you heard how he is this morning?"

"Yes. Frau Roth sent me word an hour ago that he is no worse, which, seeing what an exciting day he had, is, perhaps, as much as we can expect. I am sorry

you are not well, Dr. Roydon. You look as if you had had a bad night."

"So I have. I did not sleep a wink."

"What is the trouble—headache?"

"Neuralgia; but I have taken a big dose of quinine, and the pain is subsiding. In an hour I shall be all right."

"I am glad of that, for I know Frau Roth would like to see you. She has great confidence in Dr. Siebold; but, as she told me yesterday, she would rather have your opinion than that of all the other doctors in Dresden put together."

"She is very flattering; both in their likes and their dislikes women generally go to extremes. At one time, I fancy, Frau Roth had no very great love for me. All the same, she is a good woman, a very good woman, and she has been sorely tried. I will call after dinner—if this neuralgia does not come on again. What account

did Herr Roth give of the—affair of the bonds? Has he—ah—any idea who the man was?"

"Not the least. Never saw him before in all his life, he says. The scoundrel asked about some bonds, and while Herr Roth, after placing them on the counter, turned his back, struck him down."

"Ah! that is all he remembers—can tell, I mean?"

"The Amstrichter took his deposition, and he is going to put the case into the hands of the sharpest criminal investigator he knows," said Jack, cleverly evading the question, which, consistently with his promise to the judge, it was impossible for him to answer.

"A criminal investigator!" exclaimed Roydon. "Do you know who he is?"

"I have not the remotest idea; and if I had asked the judge I do not think he

would have told me. They are much closer about these things here than we are in England. For instance, the papers will be prevented from printing anything about the case."

"Why?"

"In order not to put the culprit on his guard. For anything we know, he is all the time in Dresden or—"

"Where?" put in the Doctor, eagerly.

"Not far off," added Jack, who had come very near letting the cat out of the bag.

"Quite right," said Roydon, with a mocking laugh. "Don't put the culprit on his guard, by any means. It would be a great mistake. The judge is wise in his generation. Well, good morning, Verelst, I must not keep you from your business any longer. When are you coming to see us? We are always glad to see you, you know."

"Very soon, I hope. To-morrow night, or the night after, probably. I am anxious to know what you think about Herr Roth."

"Well, I shall see him this afternoon. Good-bye."

Balder Roydon was as good as his word. As the short winter day was drawing to a close he knocked at the banker's door, and was received with much effusion by the banker's wife.

"I am so glad you have come," she said, as they shook hands. "I quite expected to see you last night."

The Doctor pleaded his neuralgia, and asked how Herr Roth was doing.

"Pretty well, I think, but not quite so well as I should like. He is quite himself, but very quiet, and seems tired. Dr. Siebold says it is the reaction from yesterday."

"That is very likely, I should think. Well, I shall not trouble him much—only congratulate him on the recovery of his memory, and ask him a question. The quieter he is kept the better."

"Exactly what Dr. Siebold said. We have been reading to him nearly all the morning—Helenchen, Mathilde, and I. It seems to soothe him, but we do not let him talk. Will you go in now? But it is nearly dark. I will have a lamp taken in."

"Pray do nothing of the sort, Frau Roth; we can talk quite well in the gloaming. His eyes must be still weak; the less light we have for the present the better, I think."

It was a relief to Frau Roth that her visitor asked no questions about her husband's statement of the day before, for though she had promised the Richter that both she and her husband should keep strictly secret the incident of the pinch of

snuff, she did not think it would be right to hold anything back from Roydon which he might want to know.

The only question he asked Herr Roth was about his health.

"Verelst told me all about the robbery," he observed, quietly. "The subject must be a painful one to you, and you had, doubtless, quite enough of it yesterday. Let us say no more about it."

He spoke in English, perhaps because he had been talking to Frau Roth in that language; yet all his previous conversations with the banker had been held in the latter's own vernacular, and, doubtless out of consideration for the weakness of his patient, he spoke soft and low—so low that he failed at times to make himself heard.

"I hope you feel better, Herr Roth," he said, taking an easy chair opposite to the one in which sat his patient, and near the fireplace, for Frau Roth, being an English-

woman, had discarded the customary German stove for an open fireplace, in which burnt a huge log of wood.

"I don't know," responded the banker, wearily. "It was only yesterday that I began to feel, they tell me. But, be that as it may, I don't feel as I should like to feel—by a long way. You have no idea how weak I am. It is as much as I can do to get from my bed to this chair, the nurse and my wife both helping me."

"I can easily believe that. You have been a long time laid up, remember—a great part of the time fed artificially."

"When shall I get the use of my legs, do you think, and be able to go out a bit?"

"In two or three weeks, I hope, if all goes well."

"Do you know, I was thinking just before you came in that I never should get better. I almost wish that scoundrel had

struck a bit harder. It would have saved you all a good deal of trouble and me a good deal of pain."

"Oh! Heinrich, darling, don't talk in that way, unless you want to break my heart!" cried his wife, piteously. "Think of me; think of the children. It is like flying in the face of Providence."

"Providence!" said Herr Roth, bitterly. "Providence!" Where was Providence when that brigand stole my bonds and broke my head?"

"Oh, Heinrich! Speak to him, Dr. Roydon—you are a minister of the Gospel as well as a physician—speak to him; tell him how wrong it is to show such a rebellious spirit—how much happier he would be if he could only submit himself, and—"

"And be thankful for this and all other mercies, I suppose," broke in the banker, pointing to his bandaged head.

"Speak to him, Dr. Roydon," repeated Frau Roth, now almost in tears. "Speak to him as a clergyman."

"As a clergyman?" said Roydon, in a husky voice. "I do not look upon myself as one. But this is a case rather for a healer of bodies than of souls. Though your husband has recovered his memory, and will, I hope, soon regain his health, he is still in a very abnormal condition. He is weak and irritable, his nervous system is thoroughly disorganized, and his thoughts are naturally gloomy and bitter. How can you expect them to be otherwise? But as he gains strength he will think differently, and after a few days you will have no more of these eccentric utterances."

"What will they do with the scoundrel if they catch him?" asked Herr Roth, abruptly. "Cut his head off?"

"Oh! I hope not," said Frau Roth, who seemed horrified at the suggestion. "I do hope not!"

"Why? If he has not quite taken my life he has spoiled it. I shall never be the same man again, either in body or mind. But they will not, for if the court condemned him our king would pardon him. Punishment of death is practically abolished in Germany, except when the victim wears a crown; that is why we have so many murders."

"And it is better so, Heinrich," observed the lady, rather inconsequentially. "And don't you think it would be better to give up trying to find this man? Leave him to Heaven and his own conscience. I was reading the Old Book this morning—I have never let a day pass without reading a chapter since this trouble befell us—and I came across the passage, 'Ven-

geance is Mine, saith the Lord; I will repay.' Let him alone. Depend upon it, Heinrich, that, what with stings of conscience and fear of being found out, your murderer is this very minute suffering more than you are. Don't you think so Dr. Roydon?"

Just then the log broke asunder, and a broad blaze, shooting up the chimney, threw its strong red light on a pale and writhing face, damp with sweat.

"Good Heavens! are you ill?"

"It is this neuralgia," gasped Roydon. "During the last few days I have suffered terribly from it, and when these spasms come on they are almost unbearable."

"Can I get you anything? Will you have some brandy?"

"Thank you. When it is so bad as this I generally take chloral. It is the only

thing that gives me relief. But as you have no chloral I will try a little brandy."

With a heart full of pity, Frau Roth hurried out of the room, and in two minutes came back, bringing a decanter and a glass.

Dr. Roydon poured out half a tumbler.

"It's a good deal," he said, apologetically, "but when the pain is so intense a smaller quantity has no effect at all."

"Don't mention it," returned Frau Roth, feelingly. "I know what it is quite well. When I have one of my bad headaches, nothing but a strong glass of brandy seems to do me any good."

"And now I think I had better go and nurse myself at home," said Roydon, putting down the emptied glass and rising from his chair.

"I hope you feel better?"

"Very much;" and he certainly looked so, for he had recovered his self-possession and the colour was returning to his cheeks.

"Attribute it to my abnormal condition that I have not thanked you before for all that you have done," said Herr Roth, with much of his old geniality of manner, as he took the Doctor's hand. "But for you, I should have been as good as dead, if not quite so, and if I get better I shall owe you my life. I am your debtor, Roydon, and I shall not be ungrateful."

"We are all his debtors," exclaimed Frau Roth, fervently; "all, and may God do to him as he has done to us."

"You do me too—too—much credit, you do, indeed," stammered the Doctor, again turning pale. "I did not do more—I mean I could have done no less. If Krankenheiler had known his business I should never have interfered. Good-bye. I will

come again soon. I shall hear from our friend Verelst how you are going on, and you are quite safe with Dr. Siebold. By-the-bye, I was quite forgetting. Miss Roydon sends her kind regards, and she will call to-morrow if you do not object."

"Object! Quite the contrary. Now that my husband is better we are glad to see our friends as usual, only we do not let them see him. And none will be so welcome as your daughter, Dr. Roydon."

Among other consequences of recent events was the disappearance or, at any rate, abeyance of the jealousy with which Frau Roth had once regarded Leah.

"I did not know that Roydon suffered so much from neuralgia," said Herr Roth, when their guest was gone.

"Nor I. It is something quite new for him to be unwell. But he has not been the same man since he went to England a

little while ago—just about the time of the robbery—and took cold in crossing over from Harwich. And to-day I really think he looks worse than ever, almost worse than you, Heinrich."

"Then he is a scarecrow, and no mistake. For when I looked into the glass this morning, it required a great effort to believe that the face I saw reflected there was my own."

CHAPTER III.

A TEMPTING OFFER.

On the evening after Roydon's visit to the Roths, John Verelst called at the Doctor's house in Halbe Gasse. Leah was out—gone to see Frau Roth, her father said. He looked weary and woebegone, complained of his "confounded neuralgia," and was so absent that he evidently did not hear half Jack said, and often answered his remarks at random. Then he would rouse himself, apologize for his remissness, and observe that continued neuralgia quite shattered a man's nerves, and that he was stupid from loss of sleep.

"You saw Herr Roth yesterday—what do you think of him?" asked Jack.

"Roth—Roth! Oh, yes, I saw him, of course. Yes, I saw Herr Roth yesterday."

"Did you find him better?"

"Very much. I mean a little. He has got his memory back, you know."

"Yes, I know. But do you think he will pull through?"

No answer.

"I was asking," repeated Jack; "I was asking, if you think the old man will pull through."

"Pull through! Of course he will—ah! what a twinge that was!" (putting his hand to his face). "Did you ever have neuralgia?"

"Never."

"Fortunate man! What was it? Oh, yes! You were asking about Herr

Roth. He has got his memory back, you know, and with care—Pull through! Of course he will pull through—at least, that is my opinion. The case is not mine, though, it is Siebold's; better ask him. Have you—ah—heard anything more about this famous criminal investigator?"

"No."

"If you do, I wish—I should be glad if you would let me know. I take great interest—very great interest—in the case," said Roydon, with a convulsive twitching of the lips, which showed how much he was suffering.

"Naturally. So does everybody. I only hope he may catch the ruffian. I should like to see him swing."

"Which—the criminal investigator or the—ah—the other gentleman?"

"The other gentleman, of course—the

criminal, not the criminal investigator," returned Jack, who did not quite appreciate the humour of the Doctor's joke.

"Swing, swing! that means hanged, doesn't it?"

"Yes, hanged by the neck until he's dead."

"But they don't hang people in this country, I think," said the Doctor, feeling nervously about his cravat.

"No, they behead them. Well, beheading would do almost as well."

"I did not think you were of so sanguinary a disposition, Mr. Verelst."

"Nor am I. At any rate, not in a general way; but this is an exceptional case, and as for this fellow, I confess it, I do feel rather bloodthirsty. See what trouble and confusion he has wrought! And if he gets dropped upon, and the old man does not get better, he will have a narrow

squeak for his life, though the King does dislike to sign death warrants."

"Who says so?"

"Several people. And I heard yesterday that the King takes a personal interest in the case, and is very much concerned that such a crime should be committed in the very heart of the city, and the perpetrator get off scot free. He has urged the police to leave no stone unturned."

Here the Doctor made a grimace, and put his hand to his face again.

"Your neuralgia is worse," said Jack, pityingly.

"A little, but it will soon pass. Would you mind, please, reaching me the cognac —it is there, on the chiffonier?"

Verelst did as as he was asked, and Roydon, seizing the decanter eagerly, poured out and drank off two liqueur glasses in rapid succession.

This seemed to pull him together; he became more cheerful and collected, offered Jack brandy, which he declined, and a cigar, which he accepted. When the cigar was finished Jack took his leave; he inferred from his manner that the Doctor desired to be left alone, and thought that if he strolled towards the Old Bridge he might probably see something of Leah, though, as she would almost certainly come back in a droshky, the probability was rather remote.

As Jack went away, however, his thoughts were rather of the father than the daughter.

"Roydon is evidently a great sufferer from neuralgia just now—there is no doubt about that," he soliloquized; "but there is something else; those random answers, and that absent manner, are not caused altogether by face-ache. There is some-

thing on his mind—money troubles, I suppose. Still, I don't see how that can be. He met the bill all right, and I told him that he might pay the balance at his own convenience, which means practically —and he knows it does—that he need not pay it at all unless he likes. Has he been buying more books, I wonder? I hope he is not beginning to drink, but he certainly took very kindly to that cognac; and how his hands trembled! Poor Leah!"

While Verelst was soliloquizing, Roydon was helping himself to a third glass of cognac.

"It is a fatal remedy," he murmured, "fatal, fatal; but without it I shall either go mad or betray myself. Good God, if they only—if they only—knew!" and, burying his face in his hands, the Doctor groaned aloud. "If they only knew—Leah, Roth, Verelst!" he repeated.

"Will they ever know?" (starting from his chair, and pacing wildly about the room). "Impossible! Nobody suspects, nobody can suspect. There is not a single clue.—But this criminal investigator! Bah! I have nothing to fear from him, no more than from the clumsy indignation of our friend Verelst. I think detectives must be appointed by some peculiar process of selection which favours the unfittest. All the same, I must be cautious and watch myself. If I lose my nerve I shall be undone. Heavens, what a life! Oh, these books, these books, what have they brought me to! I will never buy another, never, never, I swear it. Would that I had never seen one—would—Good heavens, what is that?" starting violently. "Only a knock at the door; how absurdly nervous I am getting. Come in!" throwing himself hurriedly into a chair, and taking up a book.

"What is it, Nettschen?"

"A letter, and the boy who brought it is waiting for an answer."

"Tell him he shall have his answer in a few minutes."

"Ah! from old Simon" (reading).

"I have it in my power to offer you a rare prize, an illustrated copy of Leuckfeldi's RERUM GERMANIARUM, in 2 vols., published at Frankfort-on-the-Main, A.D. 1707, quite perfect, and the fine binding in a state of excellent preservation. I got it only yesterday, a great bargain, and if you take it at once will let you have the copy at a very slight advance on first cost, say 1500 marks (75*l.*). An answer by bearer will oblige, as I may have a purchaser any moment."

Roydon's eyes glistened.

"A RERUM GERMANIARUM!" he exclaimed; "illustrated, too. I have been

looking for such a copy a long time. A perfect copy! What a splendid addition it would make to my collection! In fact, without it my collection will not be complete. And the price is a mere bagatelle. Fifteen hundred marks! Why, it is worth two thousand of anybody's money. And as Roths will not press me for that balance, I can afford it—But I promised Leah, and I swore only just now. No! I had better not; in fact, I must not.—Still, a RERUM GERMANIARUM of 1707! I will—yes, I will think about it. I need not decide now; old Simon will have none of those purchasers he talks about to-night. I shall not write, though; a message will do" (ringing the bell).

"Nettschen!"

"Yes, Herr Doctor."

"Tell that boy to say to Herr Simon that I will call to-morrow."

"Yes, Herr Doctor," and the girl turned towards the door.

"Wait a moment, Nettschen. Say that I will call and look at the book he mentions."

"Yes, Herr Doctor."

"He will understand that," murmured Roydon, as Nettschen's skirts whisked out of the doorway, "and is sure not to part with the copy before he sees me. Yes, a rare prize! Leah will be very angry though. But she need not know, and I can put the volumes where they will not be seen. To let such a chance slip would be almost a sin.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATOR.

"Come in!" said Jack, in answer to a knock at his door. He was looking over some accounts in Herr Roth's private room, which he now generally occupied.

Whereupon the door opened, and there entered Von Ehrenberg, his hat in one hand, the inevitable cigar in the other.

"Good day, Mr. Verelst. I hope I don't interfere with business! But if you can give me a few minutes I should like to have a word or two with you on a matter of some importance, in which, I believe, you take great interest."

"I am quite at your service, Herr von

Ehrenberg," returned Verelst, pushing his papers promptly aside, for he was much impressed with the gravity and earnestness of his visitor's manner. "This is an unexpected pleasure. I thought you were in Berlin."

"So I was, and I should not have returned so soon if I had not been particulary requested to do so. Will you kindly glance over this note? As we are comparative strangers, and I shall have to ask for your confidence, possibly your co-operation, it is well you should see my credentials."

The note consisted of a few lines from the Amtsrichter to the effect that the bearer, Herr von Ehrenberg, was an honourable gentleman, occupying a high position, in whom he could put the most implicit trust, and concluded thus: "I pray you to give him every information in

your power touching the affairs he will explain to you."

"Certainly. I shall be happy to do whatever I can," said Jack, laying down the note. What may be?—"

"The object of my visit?" struck in Von Ehrenberg; "it is about the affair Roth."

"I thought as much. You are the criminal investigator, then?"

"That, and something more, Mr. Verelst," returned Von Ehrenberg, with dignity. "At any rate, I am not a common detective. I enjoy the confidence of more than one European Government. When our Foreign Office finds it necessary to undertake a delicate investigation, or desires to unravel a diplomatic mystery, the work is almost invariably entrusted to me, and I may say that I generally succeed. I am also in relations with our secret police, but I accept no job, as you would say in

England, that does not interest me, for I am, above everything else, a student of psychology, and I take a real pleasure in unravelling complicated cases. You may, probably, consider it a not very elevated function. But every man to his measure —the work he likes best and does best. And I am a gentleman both by birth and education, Mr. Verelst. I took a degree at the University of Berlin; I have half a dozen languages at my finger ends; and there is not a great European city where I am not as much at home as you are in London.

"I do not say this by way of boasting," continued Von Ehrenberg, who spoke quietly and naturally, "but in order that you may know with whom you have to do, and that you may safely give me your confidence."

"I required no assurance on that

score," said Jack. "I saw from the first that you were a gentleman. I thought you were also a bibliophile" (smiling).

"So I am, in a small way. But I have sometimes to assume a character not my own, Mr. Verelst, and I assumed that of bibliophile for a reason I will explain another time, when we are both more at leisure. The Public Prosecutor, at whose pressing request I have taken this matter in hand, has shown me your deposition, which I have carefully read. You think the man who defrauded your brother also robbed Herr Roth?"

"I do. The cases are so similar, and that snuffbox—"

"Precisely. I am also of the same opinion. Do you suspect anybody?"

"No."

"I will put my question in another shape. Do you know of anybody who

could possibly have forged the cheque? I do not mean who is likely to have committed such a crime. I mean, can you think of anybody—assuming that he had a sufficient motive—who might, could, or would have committed it?"

"No, how can I? Remember it was my brother, not I, who was in the Balder's bank at the time. Have you formed any theory on the subject yourself?"

"I never form theories. It is dangerous. They are apt to run away with you. Theorists try to bend facts to their theories, instead of making their theories conform to facts. My method is very simple—all science is simple—I get hold of a few facts, verify them, and then make my inductions. Herein lies the difficulty. Nothing is so easy as to make a false induction."

"Have you made any inductions in this case?"

"Hardly. The facts as yet are too few. But I have made an attempt at one, which, pending further information, may serve as a fair working hypothesis."

"Would you mind telling me what it is, Herr von Ehrenberg?" said Jack, eagerly. "You see, the fact of both my brother and Herr Roth being concerned in the case makes it to me doubly interesting." And then he told Von Ehrenberg how much Hector was suffering from the suspicion that he himself was the forger of the cheque which he had received from the man with the snuff-box.

"Ah! Is that indeed so? It is true what your great Carlyle has said: 'Most men are fools.' This is an additional reason for prosecuting our investigation to a successful issue. Unless we are very

much mistaken, you and I, the finding of Herr Roth's would-be murderer will put an end to this nonsense, and clear your brother's character."

"If you can do that you will do us both a great favour," said Jack, warmly.

"I'll do my best, and when Otto von Ehrenberg undertakes a thing he does not often fail. But you were asking me about my working hypothesis. I base it, of course, on the assumption that both crimes were committed by the same man. Now what do we know about him? What kind of a man was he? Clearly an educated man of good address, speaking fluently German and English, familiar enough with Balder's bank to forge successfully the name of the leading partner, familiar enough with Roth's bank to know that the house deals in municipal bonds, and that for an hour and a half in the middle

of each day only one person remains in the office. Do you know of any such man?"

Jack shook his head.

"It is also a safe inference," went on Von Ehrenberg, "that he is a man of resolution and resource, able to conceive and carry out a bold and original scheme, and that he wanted money badly for a particular purpose."

"That does not strike me as a very original idea, Herr von Ehrenberg. Don't all thieves want money badly for a particular purpose?" said Jack, smiling.

"Not in the sense of my induction. Professional thieves rob whenever they have a chance, whether they happen to be particularly in want of money at the time or not—because it is their nature in fact. But a man who travels between Manchester and Dresden, speaks almost without accent

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two such languages as English and German, and deceives experts in banking and men of the world like your brother and Herr Roth, such a man is almost certainly not a professional thief, and he was surely in sore need of money—as you would say, desperately hard up. That is my present inference, at least. As a rule, men of education who have not lost caste forge and rob, and, above all, murder, only when they are driven into a corner, and can raise the wind in no other way. They get themselves into difficulties, contract liabilities they are unable to meet, and rather than face the consequences commit a crime. One false step almost of necessity entails another, and so they go on until they are overtaken by the inevitable Nemesis. A few, favoured by fortune or stopping after their first success, may escape even suspicion. Yet the chances are always against

them—they are so much at the mercy of accident; and a man of culture and conscience, despite his superior ability, is more likely to betray himself than a thick-skinned, low-bred swindler. Yet there are many exceptions, and I only put this forward as a fair working hypothesis, a hypothesis, moreover, which I may find it necessary to modify to-morrow. Adopting it then for the moment, we are in this position. We are looking for a well-educated man of the world, knowing perfectly English and German, conversant with bankers and banking in Dresden and Manchester, sometimes in one city, sometimes in the other, and who, about the time of the forgery, and, again, about the time of the robbery, was in great need of money. Do you know any such person, or can you think of anybody now living in Dresden who happened to be in Manchester

at the time of the forgery, or who, living at Manchester, happened to be here in Dresden at the time of the robbery—anybody, no matter who?"

"As I was not in Dresden on the first occasion it is not likely that I can. In fact, I have not met a single person here that I ever saw in Manchester, and, except Dr. Roydon, I don't know a single person here who ever was in Manchester."

"Dr. Roydon! Is he a Manchester man?"

"Oh, dear, no. He has been there a few times to see his uncle, Mr. Balder; that is all. It seems to me that this description of yours would apply to a commercial traveller or the representative of a commercial house."

"Yes," said Von Ehrenberg, pensively; "that idea does certainly suggest itself. I had already thought of it. There is also

another point—his nationality. I am disposed to think he is English. Herr Roth says the fellow spoke with a slightly foreign accent, and he is haunted with a vague fancy that he had heard the man's voice before. Now, I should like to know what Herr Roth means by a foreign accent. He may mean a French, an Italian, or even a Swiss, or an Elsass accent. It is very important. Do you think they would let me see Herr Roth? It would only be an affair of three minutes. I should ask him but two or three questions."

"In the circumstances I think they would. Shall I go with you to the house?"

"If you would be so very kind. When shall we go?"

"Now, if you like. We need not be more than an hour away."

"Good. Nothing like time present. I am ready."

Jack put on his hat and his furred overcoat.

"We shall find a carriage in the market-place," he said; "it will be quicker than sending for one."

CHAPTER V.

VON EHRENBERG ON INSPIRATION.

"Was no effort made to stop the notes paid for the forged cheque in Manchester?" asked Von Ehrenberg, when Verelst and himself were seated in the carriage; "bank-notes are generally so very traceable."

"Well, you see, ten days elapsed between the payment of the cheque and the detection of the forgery, and the few that were still in circulation came from the Continent, chiefly from Paris, and it was considered impossible to trace them."

"I understand. Received by a Paris money changer from a foreigner who gives

a false name, and paid to the Bank of France or remitted to London. No clue there, I fear. They all came from Paris, you say?"

"Nearly all; though I think I heard my brother say that, by a singular chance, he got one himself from a Manchester customer who received it from a correspondent at Chemnitz."

"Chemnitz! Why, Chemnitz is here, in Saxony! Was anybody sent to Chemnitz to make inquiries?"

"I don't think so. The police got it into their heads that the forger was all the time in Manchester.

"The thickheads! I can see what it is: I must go to Manchester myself."

"You had better, I think. When?"

"Almost immediately. I shall first make some inquiries about this snuff-box, and then I shall start."

"Yes; if we only knew who was the owner of the snuff-box, we should know who forged the cheque and stole the bonds."

"At any rate, we should have a shrewd suspicion."

Frau Roth made no objection to the proposed interview with her husband, stipulating only that it should not last more than five or, at the utmost, ten minutes. He was not quite so well, she thought, and she evidently feared that the improvement which took place between the trephining and the recovery of his memory was not being continued.

"He does not gain strength as he ought," she said, with a sigh; "but he is quite himself, and we must hope for the best."

In answer to Von Ehrenberg's questions, Herr Roth said he had a distinct impression that his assailant spoke with a slightly foreign accent—whether French or English

he could not be sure, but certainly not Bavarian, or Austrian, or Swiss. Yet the voice seemed not unfamiliar to him; he felt sure he had heard it before, but where or in what circumstances he could not, for the life of him, tell; and he was not equal to much mental effort; when he tried to recall things which he only indistinctly remembered, his head seemed to turn round.

"And it will turn round again if we do not take care," interposed Frau Roth. "I don't think he can tell you any more, Herr von Ehrenberg."

The hint was taken, and three minutes later Jack and the criminal investigator were on their way back to the Aldstadt.

"Pending further information," observed Von Ehrenberg, "I shall assume that the man we want is English. We must make assumptions sometimes, you know, and if I am wrong, I daresay your brother will be

able to set me right. I wonder if I shall have an inspiration."

"What! You believe in inspiration?"

"Not supernatural inspiration, by any means. It is merely a name I give to a mental operation which I do not quite understand. After I have been thinking over a case, and turning it inside out and outside in without being able to see my way, I sometimes have an illumination, inspiration—call it what you will. Apropos to nothing in particular, a thought flashes into my mind—generally in the shape of a suggestion or question, such as, 'Can it be ——?' The result, I suppose, of unconscious cerebration. Do not imagine that I put implicit trust in my inspirations, or that they always prove to be safe guides. I analyze them thoroughly, and only when they seem to square with the known facts of the case do I allow them to influence my

conduct or modify my inductions. But I have had some very happy inspirations, I assure you—inspirations which have led to most important results."

"It is to be hoped you will have one in the present instance."

"I should not be surprised if I had; they generally come when I smoke, these inspirations."

"That is the reason you are always smoking, I suppose?" said Jack, as his companion drew from his case another cigar, the third since they had left the bank.

"Yes," returned Von Ehrenberg, gravely. "I find often my inspirations in smoke, and I am constrained to say that they sometimes end in smoke. It is not always the fault of the inspiration, though. It may be quite sound and fully confirmed by induction; but the mis-

fortune is, that evidence, quite sufficient to convince me, is not always sufficient to convict a prisoner, and failure to convict I regard as a defeat. So you see that an inspiration, however happy, is really not much better than a shrewd guess—it is the beginning, not the end. Perhaps you may have one yourself some day."

"Which, a beginning or an end?"

"An inspiration," said Von Ehrenberg, rather severely, and with a look that showed he did not consider inspiration a fit subject for jesting. The greatest of men have their weaknessse.

"I suppose that means I may possibly suspect somebody. Well, if I do I will let you know."

"Pray do; never mind how absurd or ill-grounded your inspiration may appear. Let me know all the same, even though the man you suspect may be your dearest

friend. And you are an English gentleman, Mr. Verelst. I have your word that what has passed between us to-day, and what may pass between us in the future with reference to this case, will be locked up in your own breast."

"Of course; that goes without saying," returned Jack, in a tone which implied that he thought Von Ehrenberg might have spared the observation and trusted to his discretion without seeming to doubt his good faith.

"I beg your pardon," said the criminal investigator, who, though he did like to pose as a superior person, was by no means wanting in tact. "I beg your pardon. I see now from the way you receive it that the caution was quite unnecessary. I trust you absolutely, Mr. Verelst, as I hope you will trust me. But here we are in the Altmarkt again.

Shall we dismiss the droshky? I will have some lunch at the Hotel de Saxe, and then see if anything can be done about the snuff-box."

"We shall, of course, meet again before you start for Manchester?" said Jack, as they shook hands.

"Surely. I shall have to ask you for letters of introduction. You may expect to see me again to-morrow or the next day."

CHAPTER VI.

FOOTMARKS ON THE FLOOR.

When Von Ehrenberg had eaten his luncheon, and sought inspiration in the smoking of a fine cigar—without finding it—he resolved to pay a visit to bookseller Simon. The truth was that, despite the reputation of which he boasted, and the qualities he undoubtedly possessed, the investigator did not quite know how to set about looking for the mysterious snuff-box. As it was of the first importance neither to put the owner on his guard, nor alarm him into taking flight, advertising was of course out of the question—equally so promiscuous inquiry; the first man asked might conceivably be the culprit

himself, or somebody who, inadvertently or otherwise, would warn him of his danger. But Simon he could trust; the old fellow was as close as the grave. He was a bit of an antiquary, too—had been to numberless sales, visited many libraries and museums, and, happy thought, he took snuff, and might possibly have seen or heard of the box. If not, he might perhaps know some antiquary who made a speciality of collecting remarkable snuff-boxes, and knowing all about them. There were collectors of everything—even of cancelled postage stamps and old pots. Yes, he would certainly see Simon.

It had been a bitterly cold morning, and when Von Ehrenberg stepped outside sleet was falling; but it was not very far to Pirnaesche Strasse, and turning up his coat collar, and putting up his umbrella, he went thither on foot.

Simon was alone, "baking in his oven," as Von Ehrenberg facetiously put it, for the stove being alight, and the window and door closed, the shop was as hot as the calidarium of a Roman bath, or the "hanging room" of a calico printing establishment.

"Have you a minute to spare, Herr Simon?" he said; "I want the favour of a few words with you on a matter of business."

"I have always minutes to spare for my friends," responded the bookseller, "especially on matters of business. What can I have the pleasure of doing for you, noble sir? Come this way" (pointing to his sanctum). "Having purchased a new chair, I can offer you a more substantial seat than the one you had on the occasion of your last visit. Take the trouble to step this way, my dear sir, and we shall be in

quietness. If anybody comes in we can hear; the room, though spacious, is not quite as vast as Solomon's temple. Ha! ha!"

"I hope Solomon's temple was better ventilated and not quite as warm," said Von Ehrenberg, doffing his overcoat and wiping his perspiring face. "May I leave the door ajar, just to let in a little fresh air?"

"By all means if you like. I am surprised you find the room warm, though. I don't. It seems to me quite comfortable."

"Oh, you are a regular salamander; but I am not fireproof if you are, so with your permission—there, that is better" (opening the door).

And then, following his host into his alcove of books, Von Ehrenberg, at a sign from the old man, took possession of the chair which, though the owner called it new, looked even more ancient than him-

self. Built of oak, with huge arms and a lofty back, it was roomy enough, as the visitor observed, for a small family.

"Does it feel comfortable?" asked Simon.

"Very," said Von Ehrenberg, sinking into the embrace of the great arms, which rose almost as high as his head.

"Quite luxurious, is it not? You don't see an arm-chair like that every day. When I want to enjoy a pleasant sensation, I sit down on it a few minutes, and the pleasure is all the more exquisite that it costs nothing. It is also a true literary chair."

"A literary chair—how so?"

"I got it for its weight in books. Of course I chose them myself; that was part of the bargain."

"And what sort of literature did you select, Herr Simon?"

"Heavy, of course, to match the chair.

I gave sermons for it. You are now sitting on five hundred pounds' weight of theology, Herr von Ehrenberg. You should have seen the seller's face when he opened volume after volume, and saw that all were sermons—sermons, and no end; ha! ha! It was as good as a comedy, but they were in excellent condition and dry, as dry as a bone, ha! ha! I should only have got the merest trifle for them as waste paper; and that chair, sir, will last my lifetime, and be an excellent piece of furniture at the end of the century. But, pardon me, you have come on business. What can I do for you? Did the information I procured the other day prove useful? Has anything come of it?"

"Not yet. Something may, though, before long. However, that inquiry is in abeyance for the moment. My present errand has quite a different object."

"I am glad to hear you say so, my dear sir, because, to tell the truth, I do not think I should find it very easy to obtain any further information for you about Dr. Roydon's books and manuscripts. Never since my last visit has he invited me to call again, and one day, when I looked in, he neither seemed glad to see me nor asked me to stay."

"He gave you the cold shoulder, in fact."

"Precisely."

"Well, my present inquiry has nothing to do with Dr. Roydon. It must be kept just as secret, however, and it will be equally worth your while to give me such help as you can."

"Certainly. I am all attention, well-born sir."

"It is not about books; this time it is about a snuff-box."

"A snuff-box!"

A minute before, albeit the two men heard nothing, the outer door had been pushed wide open, and a third man walked noiselessly across the floor until he was close to the alcove, when, stopping as suddenly as if he had been turned into a pillar of salt, he remained listening in an attitude of strained attention—head outstretched, hands nervously clutched, and eyes expressive of terror and surprise.

"Yes, a snuff-box. One that has been lost and is so much prized by the owner that he has commissioned me to offer a large sum—large relatively to the value of the object—for its recovery. For any information about it I shall also be glad and willing to pay liberally. It is a gold snuff-box, bearing on the lid the effigy of death, a skull and cross-bones, and the words '*Memento Mori.*' Did you ever hear of, or see, such a snuff-box?"

"Never! What a fearful idea!" said Simon with a shudder. "I don't want to remember death, Herr von Ehrenberg, I think of it as little as possible. I would not have such a snuff-box for the world. I don't see how I can help you in this matter. If you want so much to recover the box, why not advertise?"

"That would not do at all. The individual who has—stolen the box might see the advertisement, and that we do not want. When I say stolen, I mean that it is a family heirloom, a precious relic, which has been missing for a long time, and we are not absolutely sure that it has been stolen. It may have been lost by one man and found by another, you know."

"Rather a strange story that, Herr von Ehrenberg," said the old fellow, transfixing him with his little black eye. "What is the mystery? I can serve you better if you

tell me more. Half confidences in matters of this sort are worse than none."

"You are perhaps right," returned the other, thoughtfully. "Well, I will give you my whole confidence, but remember well that secrecy is a matter of absolute necessity."

"Speak on, sir. Even if there was murder in your secret, I should keep a still tongue."

"Not a bad guess, Herr Simon; it may be a case of murder before we have done. I did not like the looks of poor Herr Roth when I saw him this morning. I would not give much for his chances of life, and if he should die it will be murder, and no mistake."

"It is about Herr Roth, then?"

"Yes. The man who assaulted and robbed him had such a snuff-box as that I have described. He showed it to Roth, who

took a pinch out of it, which was probably drugged. You understand now why I want to find the box."

"As a means of tracing the owner; and you want the affair kept secret in order not to put him on the alert."

"Exactly. And a box like that, which is both remarkable and valuable, must, methinks, have a history; has doubtless passed from hand to hand, and perhaps been sold at public sales. I thought you might, perhaps, have heard something of such a box."

"No; I never had but one snuff-box, and it was left to me by my father. But, as you say, this is a remarkable box, and somebody should know something about it. You had better consult a dealer in antiquities and such like. I'll tell you what" (striking his fist on the table), "I'll tell you what. Aaron Loewenstein is your man—

Aaron Loewenstein, in the Judengasse at Frankfort-on-the-Maine. He has been a dealer in antiquities all his life, and the business was made by Isaac, his grandfather. He never misses a great sale, and has every sort of curiosity you can imagine. He is learned, too; has picked up in his travels much out-of-the-way information, and when I was in his shop a dozen years ago, I rather think he told me that he had just then two or three very old-fashioned snuff and tobacco boxes. Yes; Aaron Lowenstein is your man. And there is Dr. Roydon; he picks up odds and ends sometimes, and has gone about a good deal; you might get some information from him. He has also a curious Italian book about poisoning, drugged snuff, and such like, which I sold him."

"That is true," said Von Ehrenberg, reflectively, "but the fewer we let into the

secret the greater will be our chances of success. Still, I think we might trust Roydon; doctors are bound to be men of discretion. However, that does not press; the other does; we must see this Frankfort man at once. Now look here, Herr Simon; I have a journey to make which would rather interfere with my going to Frankfort. Can you make this inquiry for me? You know Herr Loewenstein, too, and he might possibly be more communicative to you than to me. What say you?"

"I don't know, I really don't know, Herr von Ehrenberg," answered Simon, with a doubtful shake of the head. "It is a long way to Frankfort, the weather is bitterly cold, and I am an old man; and my business, what will become of my business?"

"Oh, you can easily get somebody to take charge of that for two or three days.

True, the weather is rather inclement, but as you will travel first class and be well paid for your trouble, that, I hope, will not be an insuperable obstacle."

"Well, on those terms, Herr von Ehrenberg, I think—yes, I think I may venture to say that I will run the risk of the journey and undertake this inquiry: a first class return ticket, my hotel expenses, and a fair indemnity for the injury my business may sustain through my absence. But I cannot leave before—let me see—the day after to-morrow."

"That will be Friday."

"Yes, Friday. They say it is unlucky to begin a journey on a Friday. But I am above these superstitions. I shall travel by the night train. It leaves the Leipziger Bahnhof about ten, I think. Wrapped in my great fur coat, I can sleep as comfortably in one of those beautiful

first-class compartments as in my own bed."

"Of course you can. Well, then, you will start on Friday. That is agreed."

"Quite so, my dear sir. Would it be *quite* convenient, do you think—"

"Would what?—Ah! I understand. You would like a little money on account. Certainly" (producing his purse); "how much shall we say?"

If Ehrenberg had just then glanced behind the barrier of books, he would have seen Dr. Roydon step softly towards the door and slip furtively into the street. He had come with the intention of buying the "Rerum Germaniarum," which Simon had offered him the day before, and as, out of consideration for his neuralgia (which, though not quite as bad as he pretended, was real enough), he wore goloshes, and the door was ajar, he entered the shop

without being heard, and, struck by the mention of his own name, stopped to listen.

When Simon and his guest went from the alcove into the shop, the sharp eyes of Von Ehrenberg detected the marks of fresh footsteps on the painted floor.

"Who has been here?" he asked, sharply. "When I came in the floor was quite clean. Somebody must have come in while we were inside there."

"It looks so," said Simon, peering dubiously at the muddy and still damp marks.

"It is so. There is no mistake about it. Has anybody been listening, do you think?"

"Impossible. The door was ajar, and a passer-by has slipped in, either out of curiosity or, as occasionally happens, to inquire the way, or ask whereabouts in the street lives Herr Schumacher Schneider, and, see-

ing nobody, he has gone out as quietly as he came in."

"Perhaps you are right, Herr Simon. But it looks queer. How could the fellow walk about without our hearing him? The next time I pay you a visit we won't leave the door open, even though I should be baked alive in this oven of yours."

In the meanwhile Roydon, overcome by terror and remorse, was staggering homeward through the fast-falling snow.

"Oh, Heaven!" he murmured; "my sin has found me out! my sin has found me out! Roth remembers the box, and the bloodhounds are on my track. That fellow must be the detective Verelst spoke about. If Simon goes to Frankfort I am undone. Aaron Loewenstein knows."

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT COULD IT BE?

On the following morning Von Ehrenberg called at Roth's bank, to inform Verelst that he intended to return to Berlin almost immediately, and that after arranging some matters there, he should start for Manchester, probably on the next day, certainly on the next day but one.

Jack gave him a letter for his brother, to whom he proposed also to write by post, saying that he might expect Von Ehrenberg in the course of—

"Three or four days," added the investigator; "but it is not necessary to say

more than that I want to see him on very important business. No need to go into details. I shall be with him almost as soon as your letter."

"All right; it will save me the trouble of a long explanation, which might puzzle Hector more than it would enlighten him," said Jack. "Have you heard anything further about the snuff-box?"

"Not yet. But I have put a rod in pickle, as your English proverb has it. There is just an off-chance that it may lead to something. I don't count on it, though. By-the-bye, I don't see why you should not mention the matter to Dr. Roydon. He is a collector of other things besides books, I believe, and may know something about '*Memento mori*' snuff-boxes. He can be trusted, I suppose? And really, whether he can

or not is hardly to the purpose, for being one of Herr Roth's medical attendants, he is sure to have heard everything, either from him or his wife."

"I thought Frau Roth promised to tell nobody."

"I fancy she would tell Roydon, though, if he asked her. She seems almost to worship him."

"She certainly thinks very highly of him, and she may well. He saved her husband's life. But just as you like. I will call this evening, and put the question. I am sure he will be glad to give us all the information in his power."

Jack was glad, too. He wanted to see Leah, but having called only two or three days previously could not well repeat his visit after so short an interval without some reasonable excuse. With this excuse Von Ehrenberg had supplied him, and

when business was over he went to his lodgings, made a somewhat elaborate toilet, stuck a flower in his button-hole, and betook himself to Halbe Gasse.

"They are both at home," said Nettschen, in answer to his inquiry; "but the Herr Doctor is indisposed. I am very much afraid the Herr Doctor is in a bad way, Herr Verelst. He came home yesterday quite white—it was snowing, you know—but his face was whiter than his coat; just like a ghost he was. When I saw him come in I could not help screaming. I thought he was going to faint, and I do believe he would have done if I had not fetched the brandy. He drank half a tumbler, and then he seemed better."

"I am very sorry to hear that," returned Jack, with a look of concern. "He had better see some other doctor, I think."

"That is what I said to Fräulein Roydon this morning. But he won't hear of such a thing; he says that he knows what is the matter with him, and no doctor can do him any good."

"Are they in the drawing-room?"

"Yes;" and as she spoke the girl opened the door and announced "Herr Banquier Verelst." Nettschen made a particular point of giving every man his full and correct title.

Leah was writing a letter, her father lying on the sofa and reading, or trying to read, the *Times*. Nettschen had not exaggerated; he looked really ghastly, and when he greeted Verelst his wretched attempt at a smile made him look more ghastly still.

"I am not very well to-day, as you see," he said, extending to Jack a shaky hand; "had a slight touch of congestion of the

brain yesterday—brought on by this cursed neuralgia, I think. But I am getting over it, and shall be all right to-morrow."

"A slight attack!" exclaimed Leah, reproachfully. "He came in nearly fainting, and I thought he was going to have a fit, or worse. He ought not to have gone out, and I told him so. But he would have his way, and he would not let me have mine and call in Dr. Siebold."

"Certainly not," returned Roydon, with an angry gesture; there is no need; this is a mere passing indisposition, I tell you. I am better this evening, and to-morrow I shall be quite well. Any news, Mr. Verelst? How is Herr Roth?"

"He was pretty much the same when I saw him yesterday. He does not gain strength, however, and Frau Roth thinks he is making very little progress towards recovery."

"I daresay. The poor woman is naturally impatient. Roth's recovery will be slow; but it will be sure, Mr. Verelst. He will get better."

"I am very glad to hear you say so. My errand this evening has reference to Herr Roth. I have been requested to ask you a question."

"Yes. What is it?"

"Well, as you are aware, another effort is being made to find out the fellow who did it—to discover the perpetrator of the crime, I mean—and the matter has been put into the hands of a gentleman from Berlin, a certain Herr von Ehrenberg. Unfortunately, however, Herr Roth's description of his assailant is too meagre to be of much use. It seems that the villain offered him a pinch of snuff from a very peculiar snuff-box."

"From a what?"

"From a gold snuff-box, bearing on the lid the effigy of a skull and cross-bones, and the motto '*Memento mori.*'"

"Who says so?" demanded the Doctor, rudely, almost fiercely, indeed. "Who says so?"

"Herr Roth."

"It is an illusion; the coinage of a distempered brain. He does not know what he is talking about. Whoever heard anything so ridiculous? A death's head snuff-box, indeed!"

Jack was going to say that it was not the first time he had heard of such a snuff-box, when the Doctor, with an angry exclamation, rose suddenly from the sofa and began pacing about the room.

"Why was I not told of this before?" he said, excitedly, at the same time stopping abruptly and glaring wildly at Jack. "Why has this supposed revelation been

kept back from me? As one of Herr Roth's medical attendants I ought to have been the first to know. Have I not done all in my power for him? Did I not diagnose pressure on the brain when that old fool of a Krankenheiler said there was none? Did I not advise trephining, and successfully perform the operation? I saved the old man's life, and this is the return I get! Yes, I saved his life, saved it, I say. And now they keep things from me. I am not considered worthy of their confidence. What does it mean, Mr. Verelst, what does it mean, I say? And who is this Von Ehrenberg, that pretends at one time to be a bibliophile, and another a detective?" And Roydon stamped on the floor and threw his arms about like a tragic actor in a torrent of passion.

Jack was about to reply, perhaps angrily —for he was both astonished and annoyed

by this outburst, which he was not conscious of having done anything to provoke—when Leah interposed. With a look of great concern she laid her hand on her father's arm, and spoke a few words to him in Russian. This seemed to pacify him; he returned to the sofa, and, lying down, pressed his head between his hands, and put them over his eyes.

Leah and Jack exchanged glances, but for two or three minutes none of the trio broke silence. Surprise had well-nigh deprived the young people of the power of utterance; it had certainly put them out of humour for conversation.

Roydon looked as if he were going to faint, but after swallowing a small glass of brandy, handed to him by his daughter, he recovered his equanimity, and became like his ordinary self.

"I am very sorry that I so completely

lost control of myself just now, Verelst," he said, faitlny, "but when these attacks come on I hardly know what I am doing, and my nerves are so thoroughly unstrung, that I get absurdly excited by the merest trifle. I fear I must have annoyed you very much; but, considering the circumstances, I am sure you will hold me excused."

"Certainly; don't mention it," returned Jack heartily. "When a man suffers as you suffer, he cannot always be master of himself. But I am sure Frau Roth had not the least intention to hurt your feelings; and as for the snuff-box—"

"It was not that at all, not at all," interposed Roydon with some heat; "it was—I really cannot tell what it was, if not the pain. And, now I think of it, Frau Roth was going to tell me what passed after her husband recovered his memory,

but I stopped her. I thought I had learnt all the essential facts from Siebold. And so I had, for this story of the snuff-box is a myth, Mr. Verelst."

"Imagined by Herr Roth?"

"Of course. Who else could imagine such a thing?"

"You don't believe in the objective existence of this box, then?"

"Of course I don't! Did I not say, before he recovered his memory, that he would have hallucinations. This is one, as also, probably, the entire story of the attempt on his life."

Again Jack thought of mentioning the Manchester incident, but remembering Roydon's recent excitement, he decided to refrain from any remark which might possibly provoke another outbreak.

"That being your opinion," he said, quietly, "I may as well tell Von Ehren-

berg that you can give him no help in this inquiry."

"Yes, tell him so. Tell him, too, from me, that he is on an entirely wrong track. However, if he chooses to follow a shadow, it is no affair of mine. Let him do as he likes," and the Doctor, sinking down on the sofa, closed his eyes, as if he had nothing more to say, and was trying to sleep.

After this, conversation became difficult.

Leah and Verelst talked in whispers; and though Jack would gladly have prolonged his stay, and talked in whispers all the evening, he could not help feeling that he was in the way. He had put his question, and got his answer; Leah was evidently much preoccupied, glancing from time to time uneasily at her father, and he, on his part, was evidently in no humour for company; so, when Jack had

remained as long as he decently could, he made a move.

"Must you go?" asked Leah.

Jack replied in the affirmative, and she did not press him to stay.

"It was very kind of you to come," she said. "I am sorry it has been so dull for you, but—" glancing at her father.

"It is never dull where you are, Miss Roydon, never," rejoined Jack, earnestly, and lowering his voice so that only she could hear.

But, so far as appeared, she did not hear, for she observed immediately, and aloud,—

"I have another letter for Russia, Mr. Verelst, and if you will kindly get it posted for me in Manchester, like the last, I shall be so much obliged."

"Certainly; I will do it with pleasure,"

he said, looking rather crestfallen, for he felt that he had made a bad shot. Neither time nor occasion was propitious for compliments and flirtation.

"A letter!" put in Roydon, opening his eyes, "Will you also post a letter for me, Mr. Verelst? It is there, on the mantelpiece, Leah."

Leah reached her father's letter, and, together with her own, handed it to Verelst.

"It will do if you post it to-morrow morning," added the Doctor, wearily. "Good evening, Mr. Verelst. I hope the next time you come you will find me more sociable."

"And very much better. When a man is unwell he cannot well be sociable."

"Oh, I shall be all right to-morrow. It's a mere passing indisposition."

"He is always talking in that way,"

whispered Leah, as she went with Jack towards the door. "Yet you can see he is really, perhaps seriously, ill. I daresay, though, that he will insist on going out again to-morrow. And those outbursts of passion! I really cannot tell what to make of them, and he absolutely refuses to consult a medical man. The mere suggestion of such a thing puts him in a rage. Come again soon, Mr. Verelst. Don't wait for an invitation. He always seems pleased to see you, and there is nobody else—nobody whose advice is worth anything—to whom I can mention my troubles, of which you know something already. Good-night" (giving him her hand).

This was more than consolation for the rebuff he had just sustained, and Jack went home, feeling not unhappy—thinking hopefully about Leah, and in a state of considerable bewilderment about her father. The

change that had come over him during the last few weeks was almost appalling. There was something on the Doctor's mind besides mere money troubles—if he had any—and Leah's manner, even more than her words, betokened that this was also her opinion. What could it be? But the more Jack questioned himself on the subject the more difficult it seemed to read the riddle.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LONG FAREWELL.

BEFORE leaving his lodgings on the next morning Jack wrote a few lines to Hector, and put them, together with Leah's letter (as he thought) into an envelope, which he addressed to Manchester. Passing a post-office, on his way to the bank, he dropped the packet into the box, and then, remembering Roydon's letter, he took it from his pocket with the intent to put that also in the box. And then he found that he had made a mistake—got the letters mixed. The one he had just posted was Roydon's, the one in his hand was Leah's.

"Stupid!" muttered Jack; "what was I thinking about?"

He knew quite well what he had been thinking about. He had been thinking about Leah. But it did not much matter. The Doctor's letter was addressed to London, and by writing another note to his brother, and enclosing it with Leah's Russian letter, the mistake could easily be rectified. Hector would have two letters to post instead of one—that was all. He forgot all about the incident in five minutes yet, like many another trivial-seeming event, it led to momentous consequences.

Herr Banquier Verelst, as Nettschen and a good many other people called him, had a busy day at the bank, and until evening came again he thought no more of Leah. Business men, however much enamoured they may be, can only give a fraction of their time to affairs of the heart, and Jack, having a conscience and somewhat of a will, did not allow sentiment to in-

terfere with duty. When the stress of the day was over, that is to say, about five o'clock p.m., he had further food for thought in the shape of a letter from Frau Roth. Her husband, she wrote, was "very low," and though she was loath to admit it, even to herself, she feared that he was growing weaker. He had talked often about him (Verelst) during the day, and seemed very anxious to see him, so if Jack could come after the bank closed and take supper with them, as he used to do in "the old happy time" (words blotted with a tear) it would greatly oblige her and please Herr Roth.

It was an invitation Jack could not have refused, even if he had felt disposed, and an hour later he was on his way to Schiller Strasse. The night was cold and dark, and the Elbe, as it rushed under the arches of the old bridge, looked as black as ink, and the hollow booming of

half-formed ice-floes, floated down from Bohemian valleys, and the wild soughing of the wind, made weird and melancholy music which coloured his thoughts and depressed his spirits.

Everything seemed changed since Jack first came to Dresden: the bright and joyous summer was gone; Herr Roth, struck down by a mysterious hand, lay between life and death. Dr. Roydon appeared to be going demented; Leah was bent on a project which could end only in her ruin, Hector had a serious trouble; while he himself, though his business prospects were far from bad, had fallen in love with a woman who was so much devoted to a cause that she seemed impervious to love; and a sweet girl whom he did not love had fallen in love with him.

Everything seemed to be going wrong.

"I know what Hector would say,"

soliloquized Jack, "he would say I am a fool. And, 'pon my word, I believe I am. Why should I worry myself about Leah? Why not go my way and let her go hers? . . . . But how if our ways lie together?

Yes, how then?

So deeply was he occupied with these vagrant fancies and unanswerable questions, that he passed Herr Roth's house without seeing it, and had to go back nearly half a mile.

Helenchen opened the door, and her sweet yet sad smile touched Jack to the heart. He took her hand and returned her greeting kindly, almost tenderly indeed, and asked about her father.

"He is quite himself, but still very weak, and what is even worse, he is losing courage. He is beginning to think he will not get better, and we are very much afraid, Mr. Verelst. I hope seeing you

will do him good. My father is always glad to see you, Mr. Verelst."

"If ——" thought Jack. "Hector would be quite right, I am a fool."

And then he followed Helenchen into the dining-room and they had supper; but it was a very different supper from the merry ones they used to have in the summer-house. Everybody seemed glad when it was over. For Frau Roth it was altogether too much, and she had twice to retire from the table in order to recover her composure.

After supper they went into the "good father's" room. He seemed greatly pleased to see his manager, but there was no denying it, the "old man" did look decidedly weaker than when Jack last saw him.

"It was very good of you to come so soon," he said, motioning his visitor to a

seat. "Why, it cannot be much more than an hour since you got my wife's letter. Draw up to the fire and light a cigar; I can stand smoke, and like the smell of tobacco, though I may not smoke myself."

Then he asked questions about business which were satisfactorily answered, and a few minutes later Frau Roth, saying she had something to attend to elsewhere, left them alone.

"I am far from well, Verelst," he went on, after a rather long pause, "and talking tires me, but I like to keep up appearances before her—she feels it so much. Yes, talking tires me. I am done for, dear friend. I shall never leave this room until I am carried—to my grave."

"Come, come, Herr Roth! don't talk in that way," remonstrated Jack, with affected cheerfulness. "You are worth

half a dozen dead men yet, and will get better and come down to the bank before many weeks are over, I am sure you will. Keep up your courage, whatever you do."

"I do try," said the old man, sadly. "But it is hard to keep your courage up when you feel yourself grow feebler every day, and I have a strong foreboding—however, I did not ask you here to talk about myself. I have something very serious to say to you, my friend, and I want to say it quickly, for talking tires me, and there is no telling how soon— It lies heavy on my mind, Verelst, that I have no son to step into my shoes and carry on the business my dear old father founded, and which he and I have carried on with honour and credit for more than threescore years. Hermann is of no use, and worse than no use. I would like you to

take his place—if you can see your way—to take the place that he should take and—I may as well come to the point at once—to marry our Helenchen.

"Marry Helenchen!"

The idea, as we know, was not absolutely new to Jack, yet, coming so suddenly and unexpectedly, Herr Roth's proposal surprised him beyond expression.

"Wait a minute," continued the old man, "wait until I have finished before you say anything. I say I should like you to marry Helenchen, but not unless you can see your way, and I don't ask you for any engagement—not for an answer even. It would not be fair. Think of it; that is all I ask. I have a high esteem for you, John Verelst, as my desire to leave you my business and give you my daughter prove. And I think it would be

greatly to your advantage. The business is sound if not very large, and the child will be well off; she will have something like 400,000 marks, and though that may not seem much to an Englishman, it is a large fortune for a German maiden. But, what is better still, Helenchen is a good girl, and would make any man worthy of her a good wife. A sweet, lovable girl, and I think she likes you. I do think she likes you, dear friend. I do not press you for an answer, but if you could see your way it would be a great comfort to me now and a priceless consolation to Frau Roth when, when—you know what I mean. Think of it, think of it, John Verelst. Dear little Helenchen! My poor wife!"

"God bless you, Herr Roth, I will think of it," cried Jack, deeply moved. "You have been good and kind to me,

and I will do all in my power for you and yours. Whatever comes, I will stand by them, and try to be to Frau Roth as a son. Yes, dear master, I will think of it."

Perhaps, in saying this, and in saying it so warmly, he went too far, and so raised expectations which he knew he could not fulfil. But he was under the influence of strong emotion, and it was simply impossible for him to tell "the old man" that he could not marry Helenchen—that he loved another. It would have been too cruel.

"God bless you, John, and may my blessing, if it will do you any good, be with you all your life long! You have been a comfort and a help to me ever since you came—I feel tired; you had better send Frau Roth to me. God bless you, once more. Farewell!"

"Farewell!" said Jack, in a broken voice; and after kissing the old man on both cheeks, he went his way.

It was a long farewell. They met never more.

CHAPTER IX.

A STARTLING EVENT.

As John Verelst, walking homeward, buried in thought and sad at heart, neared a police station in the neighbourhood of the New Market, he observed a number of civilians and gendarmes standing before the door, and, as might appear from their gesticulations, engaged in animated discussion. But being too much preoccupied to feel very curious, he was going on without heeding, when the words, "robbery, murder," uttered several times in quick succession, and with great emphasis, struck on his ear, and brought him to a sudden stop.

"What is wrong?" he asked one of the police officers.

"Only another murder! Old Simon, the Jew bookseller in Pirnaesche Strasse, has been found in his own shop with his skull beaten in."

"And who—has anybody?—"

"Not yet. But measures have been taken. It is thought to have been done by the same gang that murdered Herr Roth."

In any circumstances a sufficiently startling event, but its presumed resemblance to the attack on Herr Roth, and the possibility that it might have been perpetrated by the same miscreants who had so nearly killed him, rendered it doubly horrible, and Jack went home with a mind so perturbed that he found it impossible to sleep. The one event, moreover, was quite as mysterious as the other, for though he called early next morning at the Amtsrichter's office, he

could learn little more than had been told him by the policeman on the night before.

It seemed that Simon (whom, though Verelst did not know, he had once or twice seen as he passed the shop in Pirnaesche Strasse) was about to start on a journey, for which he had made every preparation, and that a droshky was ordered to come for him at half-past eight. The vehicle appeared at the door exactly at the time appointed, and the driver, seeing that the shop was shut, and knowing that Simon had to catch a train, rang the bell, and the summons producing no effect, he rang again. This brought Simon's niece and the housekeeper, who was nearly as old as himself, to the window of the floor above, where they lived.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"I have come to take the Herr

Buchhändler (bookseller) to the station," answered the driver.

"Tell him, then; he is in the shop."

"Shop is shut up."

"Try the door; he has, maybe, fallen asleep."

The man did try the door, and there being no answer to his call, and the place in darkness, he struck a match and lighted the gas.

The Herr Buchhändler had, indeed, fallen asleep—never to waken more. He lay in a heap against a pile of books, having been apparently struck from behind by somebody armed with a blunt instrument, which had fractured the occipital bone, and must have killed him instantly.

No wonder Fräulein Rebecca had heard no cry; he could have uttered none. The till was empty, but whether it had been emptied by the victim or his assailant

there was nothing to show. But Simon's watch, a valuable, though old-fashioned time-keeper, his gold snuff-box, and whatever money he may have had in his possession, were gone.

This was all. No suspicious-looking character had been seen to enter or leave the shop; the murderer had left no sign, and the police were quite at fault. They could only assert their belief that, as the case so much resembled Herr Roth's, the two deeds had been done by the same gang. They took the gang for granted. So did the Amtsrichter. This gave them hope.

"When there is a gang," he said to Jack, "we have always a better chance of success. They are sure, sooner or later, to quarrel and denounce each other. They have not got such a good haul as they did when they robbed Herr Roth, though. Simon never had much money

about him, and his niece thinks the murderers cannot have got more than two or three hundred marks—besides the snuff-box and watch. The snuff-box they have put into the pot, of course, but the watch they will not find it very easy to get rid of. It is a fine old-fashioned repeater, bequeathed to Simon by his father. It chimes the hours and quarters, and has a Hebrew text engraved inside the back. I have a full description of it, and if the thieves attempt to part with it they will be caught. You see I was quite right, Mr. Verelst. I said from the first that there was more than one concerned in Herr Roth's murder, and that they were in Dresden, and I am quite as sure as ever that the principal culprit is either English or American. But whoever he is we must have him. We cannot let people be murdered in their

houses in this way. When do you expect to see Von Ehrenberg?"

"In a week or ten days."

"You will write and tell him what has happened?"

"I shall write to-day."

As soon as Verelst reached the office he proceeded to carry this intention into effect, and being full of his subject wrote rather a long letter. Just as he was finishing it Dr. Roydon called. He had come to change some Russian money, and looked into Jack's room to ask after Herr Roth.

"What do you think about this terrible affair in the Pirnaesche Strasse?" inquired Jack, after he had given the latest news from Schiller Strasse, which was anything but satisfactory.

"Terrible affair in Pirnaesche Strasse. What do you mean?"

"You have not heard, then? Why, all the town is ringing with it. Old Simon—the Jew bookseller, you know—was murdered last night in his own shop, just as he was about to start on a journey.

Roydon, who was standing before Verelst's table—having the moment before refused an invitation to take a seat—dropped into the nearest chair as if he had been shot, and turned as pale as a sheet.

"Simon murdered! Simon murdered!" he gasped. "How—when—where?"

"In his shop, as is supposed, about seven o'clock last night, with a blunt instrument, which fractured his skull."

"Simon murdered! Impossible! Why, I was in his shop at five o'clock and bought a book from him."

"Were you, really? That may be an important piece of evidence. We must let the police know. The police think the

crime is the work of the same miscreant who robbed the bank and so cruelly used our old man."

"No! no!" exclaimed Roydon; "no, a thousand times no. It is the hand of God, it is the hand of God!" and then, without another word, he took up his hat and hurried from the room.

"He is mad," thought Jack, gazing after him in mute astonishment; "stark, staring mad. If he goes to Leah in that state he will frighten her to death." And there was a wild look in the Doctor's eyes which, even more than his words, showed that, whether mad or not, he was at least in a condition of intense excitement.

But he did not, as Verelst feared he might do, go to Leah in that state, for in less than ten minutes he was back at the bank, looking much as usual.

"I have returned," he said, quietly, "to

apologize for leaving you in the way I did just now. You must have thought it very strange. But the fact is that, in the present state of my nerves, owing to my neuralgia, loss of sleep, and the heavy doses of chloral I am obliged to take—"

"And brandy," thought Jack.

"In the present state of my nerves any sudden shock completely upsets me, and, there is no denying it, I talk at random. I did just now. And—you may not believe it—but I have not the most remote idea of what I said. There is no doubt of it, I suppose—Simon really is murdered?"

"Well, I did not see it done, and I have not seen the body; but I have my information from the police, and I am really afraid it is too true, Dr. Roydon."

"There is nothing about it in this morning's papers, though."

"Very likely. Remember, the murder was not discovered until late last night, and I do not think there are any penny-a-liners in Dresden on the look out for horrors."

"Yes, it must be true. But it is so dreadful to think that the man one was talking to at five should be dead before nine, that I can hardly realize it. Poor old Simon! I went to buy a book he had offered me—a fine copy of the 'Rerum Germaniarum'—and I paid him for it, as I think I told you."

"Yes, and I said you had better inform the police. The murderer very likely took the money you paid for the book. Was it much?"

"Fifteen hundred marks."

"A big price for a book," said Jack,

with a look of some surprise. "What was it in—the money, I mean?"

"Notes: fifteen of one hundred marks each."

"That is very important, and might lead to something, especially if you have got the numbers. You must see the police by all means; I should go at once if I were you."

"You are right, I will. Yes, I will go to the police and tell them all—I mean all I know about Simon," returned Roydon, dreamily. "To whom should I apply? I have had so little to do with the police (smiling) that I do not know how to go about it."

"Go to the examining judge. Here is his address" (writing it and a few words of introduction on his own card). "You can use my name. I have had a good deal to do with him in connection with

Herr Roth's matter. The sooner you go the better, I think."

"I think so, too. Yes, I will go. Good-bye," and suiting the action to the word, he put on his hat and slowly descended into the street.

CHAPTER X.

ROYDON RECEIVES A MESSAGE.

"VERY queer," soliloquized John Verelst, putting his pen behind his ear, leaning back in his chair, and thrusting his hands into his pockets—a way he had when he wanted to think. "Very queer. He said he had not the least idea what he had said, and yet he evidently remembered all that passed! And sometimes he acts like a man in a dream; at others, as if he was wild with rage, or so scared that he does not know what he is doing. I shall never forget the look that came over his face when I told him old Simon had been murdered. He might have seen a ghost. He must really be going off his

head; and no wonder, seeing how he suffers from neuralgia, and how much chloral and cognac he drinks. Dr. Roydon is going downhill fast. And yet, when I first came to Dresden he seemed to be all right, as strong in mind and body as any man need be. If anything happened to him it would be very hard on Leah. Would she still persist in her idea of going to Russia, I wonder? And Helenchen! I am afraid I said too much to the old man yesterday. He is sure to have told Frau Roth, and they will be taking it for granted. Yes, I went rather too far; yet how could I have said less—Roth only just alive—and they have been so kind? But it is awkward, very awkward—everything seems awkward just now;" and Jack, with a sigh, half of perplexity, half of discouragement, pulled his hands out of his pockets, and went on with his writing.

In the meanwhile Dr. Roydon had gone to the police office, but curiously enough he did not go straight, taking first several turns round the Theatre Platz, and walking twice up and down the Ostra Allee. Even when he got to the door he hesitated.

"I don't like it," he murmured; "but after what has passed there is no alternative. It would be more dangerous now not to see this man than to see him. What a fool I was to let out! I don't know what I was thinking about. Well, if I have to undergo the ordeal, the sooner it is over the better. I will say as little as I can—that is the main point—as little as I can. I have said too much already."

When the magistrate heard the Doctor's name and Verelst's message he ordered his visitor to be shown into his room at once.

"I am glad to see you and to make your

acquaintance, Herr Doctor," he said, courteously offering him a chair. "You have some communication to make, as I gather from Herr Banquier Verelst's card, with reference to the murder of Herr Buchhändler Simon?"

"I know nothing of the murder, Herr Richter; until Herr Verelst told me I did not even know there had been a murder. All I can tell you is that at five o'clock yesterday afternoon I saw Simon alive and well, bought a book from him, and paid him 1500 marks."

"For the book?"

"For the book."

"But this is really very important evidence, Herr Doctor," returned the judge, deferentially; a man who could pay 1500 marks for a book was clearly a man to be respected. "Very important evidence. These 1500 marks may have been the

motive of the murder. Did anybody see you pay them to Herr Simon?"

"I don't think so. But it is possible, for I rather think the door was open at the time."

"Ah! yes. It is quite possible; very probable, I should say. In what shape was the money—notes?"

"Yes, as I told Verelst just now—he asked the same question—fifteen one-hundred mark notes."

"Have you the particulars of them?"

"No; I never enter the particulars of the notes I receive; it would be too much trouble."

"But if you got them from a bank it may be possible to ascertain the number."

"I don't think I got any of them from a bank. Some I got from one person, some from another, but from whom I cannot tell you."

"Try to remember."

"I will try; I am trying now. But I do not think it is of the least use. I am very careless about money, except when I happen to want some. I often put notes in my drawer and forget all about them for weeks together."

"What a Crœsus the man must be!" thought the judge, enviously.

"It is very unfortunate. Those notes might furnish a clue, you know."

"If the thieves have got them," suggested Roydon, "Are you sure that they are not somewhere in Simon's house, or his shop?"

"That I shall, of course, ascertain; but I should think it is very unlikely, and if you could recall where you got even one of those notes it might furnish an important clue. If you do you will communicate with us?"

"Certainly."

"In any event it is something to know that Simon was in his shop at five o'clock, and that, in addition to other moneys, he had in his possession 1500 marks in bank notes; and I am greatly obliged to you, Herr Doctor, for giving us the information. If everybody were equally zealous in the cause of justice, we should have fewer crimes to deplore than we have at present."

"Naturally, for there would be no evil-doers," said Roydon, drily.

"How? Ah, yes, I see. If everybody was zealous in the cause of justice, of course—Ha! ha! very good. Well, I hope, Herr Doctor, that, thanks to your timely information, we shall be able to trace the author of this crime; and it is all the more important to do so, as I am sure he is a member of the same gang, if he be not the very same man, who assaulted Herr Roth and robbed his bank. I am glad to have

made your acquaintance, Herr Doctor. Farewell, my dear sir, farewell."

"No very difficult ordeal, after all," soliloquized Roydon, as he bent his steps towards Halbe Gasse. "He was not half as troublesome as he might have been. It is a good omen."

Had Roydon suspected what an ordeal he was to undergo within the next twenty-four hours, he might not have found much comfort in the judge's want of insight, or regarded the incident which had just come to pass as being ominous of good.

The next day was Sunday, and every Sunday morning the Doctor went to church, but never once since his last visit to England had he taken any part in the duty. Though Mr. Ashley had several times solicited his help, he declined even to read the lessons, always on the same ground—that, having entirely divested himself of his clerical

character, he would do nothing which might imply that he was other than a layman. This rather annoyed the chaplain, who very much liked to be helped, and for some time past there had been a marked cooling of their friendship.

When he got back from church, Roydon found a letter from Frau Roth, sent by a special messenger, who was waiting for an answer. Her husband seemed worse, she said, and as Dr. Siebold was away in the country, she would take it as a great favour if Dr. Roydon would come up to Schiller Strasse as soon as he conveniently could.

He showed the letter to his daughter.

"I suppose I must go," he said.

"Of course you must. Why should you hesitate?" returned Leah.

"It is Siebold's case, you know, and I do not like to interfere."

"What does that matter? He is out of

town, and he could not possibly take offence. Besides, it is only kind. Think what Frau Roth's feelings would be if you were to refuse."

"Well, then, I will go. Let Nettschen tell the messenger that I shall be there in an hour. I wish, though—however, it does not matter. Yes, say I will be there."

Leah was at a loss to understand why her father should hesitate to comply with Frau Roth's request, or put off his visit for an hour; there was nothing to prevent him from going at once, and she mentally noted it as a curious fact that ever since Herr Roth had recovered his memory, the Doctor seemed to have lost all interest in the case, and had seen his patient only once or twice.

CHAPTER XI.

"I AM THE MAN!"

"He has got weaker every day, lately, and to-day he is so much weaker that I am growing really uneasy. That is the reason I sent for you, Dr. Roydon. Thank you so much for coming," said Frau Roth, with ill-concealed agitation, almost before Roydon had crossed the threshold.

And then she led him into her husband's room.

Herr Roth was lying on a sofa, with eyes half closed, and looking very much worse than when Roydon had last seen him.

"I am glad to see you," he said, feebly,

extending his hand; "I thought you had quite deserted me."

"No, no; you do me wrong. I did not like to trouble you, and I knew that with Dr. Siebold you were in good hands," answered Roydon, hurriedly. "How do you feel?"

"Weak, very weak. But I am quite without pain; thank Heaven for that."

"Yes," put in his wife, anxious to make the most of the one favourable symptom. "That is true. He seems to be quite free from pain. He has not even a headache, and he sleeps a great deal."

Poor Frau Roth! It was stupor rather than sleep, and not at all a favourable sign. But Dr. Roydon, who was closely watching the sick man, made no remark.

After a few more questions had been asked the banker beckoned to his wife.

"Thou hast not been out all day, dear

woman; take a turn in the garden and get a breath of fresh air; the Doctor will keep me company a few minutes," he whispered, tenderly.

Frau Roth started and turned pale. Her loving heart told her that he wanted to ask Roydon a question which he feared it might pain her to hear. She sighed deeply, and, bending down, kissed him fondly, and as she did so a hot tear dropped on the old man's face. Then she turned away and crept quietly out of the room.

"It is very hard, Doctor, very hard," said Herr Roth, in a broken and scarcely audible voice, "to be forced to part in this cruel way. For it is coming to that—My time is nearly up, I fear. And that brings me to the point. I want to ask you—not as a doctor, but as man to man, as a good and dear friend—I want to ask you if you don't think" (with a great

effort)—"if you don't think I am nearly at the last? I feel so."

Roydon tried to answer, but words seemed to fail him. Then he counted his patient's pulse, stethoscoped his heart, and listened to his breathing.

"Well?" said Herr Roth.

Roydon bowed his head.

"Soon?"

Again Roydon bowed his head; it was impossible to deny it—the old man was dying.

"Merciful Heaven, must it then be?" murmured Roth, closing his eyes.

Then there followed a silence of several minutes.

"I have settled my affairs," he continued, looking up. "I have nothing more to do but say farewell. Will it be to meet again, I wonder? Please Heaven it may!—You have been very good, Herr Roydon.

I have forgiven you that debt. My wife will do—all that is necessary. Is there aught else—you would like me to do?"

"There is," answered Roydon, in a hoarse whisper; "there is. I want you to—forgive your murderer."

"Never! never!" exclaimed the banker, roused by this unexpected request to sudden animation. "How is it possible? Think of what he has done. I never harmed him, yet he has taken my life and plunged a once happy family into deepest sorrow. How can you ask such a thing? I know not who he is, but with my dying breath I curse—"

"Hush!" said Roydon; "for Heaven's sake, hush! As you hope yourself to be forgiven, forgive the man who did you this cruel wrong."

"Never, so help—"

"He has suffered cruelly, and will do all he can to atone."

"How do you know?"

"Forgive him, Herr Roth; forgive him, I entreat you."

"How know you that he has suffered? Why are you so pressing, Herr Roydon?"

"Because, because—Heaven forgive me—I am the man! I am your murderer, Heinrich Roth!"

"You! You!" screamed Roth, rising on his elbow, and extending his hands towards Roydon, who had now risen to his feet. "You, Balder Roydon, whom I thought my friend! *WHY?*"

"I was in sore need of money, and you would not renew that bill—that fatal bill. But I did not mean to kill you, Herr Roth; I did not; and I have done all I could to atone—to save—to—"

"To save the life you destroyed! That voice! That voice! It is the same; yes, it is the same. Murderer! murderer! No, no! I cannot forgive, and Heaven will punish—will punish—will pu——"

The old man could say no more; with a hoarse gurgle in his throat he sank exhausted on his pillow.

Roydon took his victim's hand and held it for several minutes. When he let it go the arm dropped like lead, and at the same moment the door opened, and a woman glided softly into the room.

"Heaven help you and forgive me, Frau Roth," said Balder Roydon, in an intense whisper. "Your husband is dead!"

CHAPTER XII.

A FRIGHTFUL SUSPICION.

About the same time that Dr. Roydon started for church, John Verelst entered his sitting-room. Uneasy thoughts had rendered his night restless, and he had risen late. On his breakfast-table were several letters. One was from Hector. Jack opened it with rather languid curiosity, for he had heard from his brother only a day or two before, and it was too soon to expect news of Ehrenberg's arrival in Manchester.

"I posted the two letters," it ran, "and I want you to tell me at once who is the writer of the one addressed, 'Messrs.

Shortboy, Sheepshanks, Hornblow, and Bacon, Publishers, Paternoster Square, London, E.C.,' for I am as sure as I can be of anything I have not seen with my own eyes that the same hand filled up the cheque I got from the man with the death's-head snuff-box; and if he did not actually forge Balder's name he knows who did. To make assurance doubly sure, however, I have had a photographic copy of the address taken, and sent it, together with the cheque, to Lemaire, the celebrated London expert. If possible, send me immediately some further specimens of the same handwriting, and, above all, find out who is the writer—if you don't know already. When your friend, Von Ehrenberg, comes I shall give him every attention and all the information in my power. Your affectionate brother, Hector.

P.S.—Make full inquiry, but be very dis-

creet; as yet it is only a case of suspicion, and a hasty step might spoil everything."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Jack, throwing the letter down on the table. "Why, the writer of that address is Dr. Roydon! Hector is misled by a chance resemblance between the two writings. I never knew anything so absurd."

And then he took up the letter and read it a second time. Clearly not a hastily scribbled, impulsive letter; Hector was not an impulsive man—very clever about handwriting and that, and he was sure not to have written except after a careful comparison of the direction and the cheque. The mere fact of his having a photographic copy taken and sending it to Lemaire showed how much he was in earnest—how deliberately he had acted.

"Can it be possible?"

And then Jack recalls Roydon's strange

conduct of late—his fits of abstraction, varied by paroxysms of passion, his chloral taking and dram drinking, his indifferent health and altered looks—all changes dating from the time of the robbery. By a strange coincidence, too, he was the only person known to him answering to Von Ehrenberg's requirement of being equally familiar with Dresden and Manchester, and the methods of business pursued in the two banks; for Roydon could hardly have paid a visit to Manchester without learning something of how matters were managed at Balder and Baxendale's. He would also be acquainted with Mr. Balder's signature, and have no difficulty in obtaining blank cheques. In fact, the Doctor had every facility for committing the forgery, and, owing to his mania for book-buying, was often straitened for money.

"If you suspect anybody, no matter how

far-fetched the suspicion may seem, let me know," had said Von Ehrenberg.

Jack got up from his chair and walked impetuously about the room.

"I am an idiot!" he exclaimed; "an idiot. It is not possible—altogether out of the question. Was not Roydon away at the time, and does not the old man say his assailant was utterly unknown to him? Ah! But he says, too, that the voice seemed familiar; and, yes—Roydon may have disguised himself. A pair of spectacles, a wig, and a false beard would easily render him unrecognizable. Yet, how kind he has been to Herr Roth and his family! But for him the old man would have died long since; and, after all, Roydon is a gentleman; he is incapable of anything so dastardly—and Leah's father! What would be her thoughts if she knew I had entertained such a frightful suspicion—even for

a moment! I will dismiss it from my mind—think no more about it; and while telling Hector by whom the direction was written, say it is quite out of the question that Dr. Roydon can be the forger of the cheque."

The letter was written and despatched; but Jack found it no easier than before to dismiss the subject from his thoughts. He could neither read it away nor talk it away. Do what he would it surged up in his mind again and again. At night it kept him awake for hours, and haunted him in his sleep. When he got up it worried him still, and continued worrying him until two letters—one from Helenchen, the other from Leah—diverted for a while the current of his thoughts. The first in a few touching words—"The poor father is dead"—announced the demise of Herr Roth. The second told him that Doctor

Roydon was seriously ill—with brain fever, his daughter feared—and she asked him to call in the course of the day.

Though naturally much moved, Jack was not greatly surprised by the news of the old man's death; but it had come sooner than he expected, and he keenly regretted not having seen him once again before the end. To Helenchen he wrote a letter, as to the wording of which he found considerable difficulty, expressing his sympathy and sorrow, and offering to her and her mother all the help it might be in his power to render "in this time of trial and trouble."

This done, and some pressing matters of business arranged, Verelst betook himself to Halbe Gasse, to offer there also such help and consolation as he might be able to render; and consolation might be necessary, for brain fever was a dangerous

malady, and Roydon's health had lately shown evident signs of breaking up. It was quite possible that the death of the banker might be followed by that of the Doctor, and then what would Leah do?

CHAPTER XIII.

SURPRISES.

Gloomy forebodings are not always justified by the event, and Jack found Roydon much less seriously ill than Leah's letter had led him to expect.

The Doctor had come home the evening before in a state of terrible agitation and distress, and, after informing her of Herr Roth's death, retired to his room. How he spent the night she could not tell, but in the morning he was delirious, and without asking his leave she had called in Dr. Neumann, a physician who lived in the same street. The moment he set eyes on Roydon he declared the case to be one of

incipient brain fever, ordered the necessary remedies, and enjoined the greatest quietude.

"Dr. Neumann is in hopes that it may be warded off," said Leah, "and since I wrote to you my father seems decidedly better. He is quieter and disposed to sleep. But he gave me a great fright."

"He was very bad, then?"

"He raved so, and said such terrible things. I was almost at my wits' end. I feared somebody else might hear him, and I asked you to come because there is no one else I can trust."

What terrible things could he have said that she was afraid of being heard? A strange thought flashed across Jack's mind; but it was a point as to which he felt that it would not be right to question her, so he merely observed that she might trust him implicitly, and that he should only

be too glad to do for her whatever he could.

Leah listened, but she did not answer; her eyes bespoke trouble, and it seemed to Jack that she was debating in her mind whether to make a confident of him or not.

"I fear your father is worse than you like to admit," he said at length, by way of breaking a silence that was becoming painful.

"It is not that," she replied, rousing herself with evident effort. "He is not in danger yet; but he may be in very great danger. And I may as well tell you now—you will have to know sooner or later—Balder Roydon is not my father."

"Not your father!" exclaimed Jack. "Not your father! What then?" and his heart seemed to stand still, and the blood rushed so suddenly to his head that he could hardly see. "Could she be his

wife; or—or—?" The thought was madness.

"No," she answered slowly, either not observing or not heeding Verelst's confusion; "I am not his daughter, and my name is not Leah Starkova. My story is very simple, and soon told. I knew Leah well, and was with her when she died; and shortly afterwards, when my political friends considered it necessary for me to leave the country for a season, Dr. Roydon gave me her papers and let me pass as his daughter. He did me a great service, in fact; I owe him a heavy debt of gratitude, and I have tried to be to him as his own child would have been. I have done my utmost—unfortunately with little success—to restrain that fatal passion for buying books, regardless of their cost or his means, which I have long had a presentiment would bring upon him some great

trouble. And now more than ever he needs my help, and shall have it; for whatever may be his faults, Balder Roydon has been good to me."

"I am very sorry for him, and in anything you propose to do for him you may count on me," said Jack, overjoyed to find that the suspicion he had for a moment entertained was unfounded.

"It is not a question of doing anything for him in the way you seem to think, but of protecting him from a great danger. It may be necessary to get him out of the country, but at present that is impossible. I may be mistaken—I hope I am—yet I fear he has done something. Something that—but I must say no more; I have no right. And, after all, surmise is not fact. If the need arises I will be more explicit."

"Your name is not Leah, then?" said Jack, who was now thinking less of Roydon

than of the startling revelation he had just heard. "But you will always be Leah to me."

"Oh, yes" (smiling); "I am Leah still. Before I became Leah I was called Ida Mikailovna Volkovsky. Yet I am half English, as I said; but from my mother, not from my father."

"Ida Mikailovna Volkovsky! I have surely heard that name before."

"That is very likely. It was I who shot General Tcharkevitch, and I think the story got into the European papers."

"You, Leah! You shot General Tcharkevitch?" exclaimed Verelst, aghast.

"You need not look so horrified" (smiling again); I did not want to kill the man. I only broke his arm, and he deserved even a more severe lesson, dastard as he is!"

"What was it he did? Though

I remember the name I forget the facts."

"He struck Zaina Ivanovna, a young girl, on the face with his cane because she did not answer a question to his satisfaction."

"You served him quite right. He deserved not his arm only, but every bone in his body breaking," said Jack, indignantly. "But you will surely not persist in your idea of returning to Russia; they would hang you."

"It is possible—if they take me. All the same, I must return, dear friend."

"Oh, no, do not! Stay with me!" cried Jack, taking both her hands in his. "You called me 'dear friend' just now; let me be that and something more—your dear husband, for I love you, Leah; and if you go back to that terrible country, where every man's liberty and every woman's honour are at the mercy of a tyrannical

Government and a brutal police, I think it will break my heart. And why should you go back? You have done your part, and earned a right to repose. Stay with me and be happy."

"No, no, it is impossible. It would be an infamy to think of happiness while my country is so wretched. Russia has need of me, and Russia is supreme. Whether I live or whether I die, I must go and take part once more in the struggle for liberty on the inflamed soil of my native country."

"Let me go with you, then, and I will take part in the struggle, too," exclaimed Jack, recklessly. "I care only for you; without you life will be a blank. Let me go!"

"You are very good and noble," said Leah, who seemed deeply touched by this proof of her lover's devotion. "In happier circumstances, perhaps—But no, I could

not accept such a sacrifice. And it would be useless. You do not understand the language; the danger would be doubled. We might have to spend our honeymoon in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. No, dear friend, when the time comes, and it will come soon, we must part. But we will be to each other as sister and brother, and I shall never, never forget you, dear friend."

These words, and the pathetic look by which they were accompanied, drove Jack almost wild.

"No, no, I must be more than a brother. I will not take this refusal. Think better of it, Leah. Ask your heart, and if you love me, as I think you do, it would be wronging both yourself and me—"

"You are mistaken," interrupted Leah; "I cannot let you remain under this illusion. I love you because you have been good and

kind: because I believe you have great capacities of devotion to a cause or a person, perhaps unsuspected by yourself; but it is the love of a sister for a favourite brother; not love in the sense you mean. There is not room for it in my heart, dear friend. I could not do it. It is not in my nature to give myself to a man, and domestic life is not my ideal."

"Oh!" sighed Jack, "must I give up all hope, then?"

"So far as I am concerned I fear you must. But if you want to marry, why not marry Helene Roth, or some other girl whose ideal is life-long devotion to a husband and family?"

"But the misfortune is I love you, not Helenchen."

"You may love us both—Helenchen as bride and wife; me as friend or sister. Cease to think of me in any other light,

and the feeling will pass away. Unreciprocated love, like an unfed flame, burns itself out. And love and domestic bliss are, after all, not the chief ends of life. Many people contrive to live, not very unhappily, without them. Devotion to a cause is nobler, I think."

"I daresay you are right. But there is a right sort of devotion and a wrong sort—you must at least admit that; and I cannot think that for a young woman to risk her life in a quixotic enterprise is right. However, you know best. Perhaps if I were a Russian I should feel as you feel. If it cannot be as I would like, let us then be friends—sister and brother; and I will strive to be to you all that a loving brother should. But the idea of losing you—it is more than I can bear, Leah?"

After a short interval of silence Jack, whose feelings were too deep for words,

kissed her passionately. And then he went away sorrowful, for he loved her much. All the same, he felt that there was truth in what she said, and he resolved not to repine, but to imitate Leah's singleness of purpose, and to bear his disappointment as a man worthy of a noble woman's friendship should.

CHAPTER XIV.

DISCOVERIES.

VERELST heard nothing of Von Ehrenberg until the latter's return to Dresden, three days after Herr Roth's funeral, and his time and thoughts had been so fully occupied with other matters that, when the detective appeared in the office, Jack's first feeling was one of surprise that he had come back so soon.

"You have put the poor old man in the ground?" said Von Ehrenberg, after a few unimportant questions had been asked and answered.

"Yes, and a very sad business it was."

"I am sure. Such things always are. They remind us that we others are all

under sentence of death, and it is not a pleasant subject for reflection. I saw your brother. He sends his greetings, and is well pleased at the prospect of spotting the scoundrel with the death's-head snuff-box, as he puts it. He showed me your letter, and we compared the direction of the envelope with the writing on the cheque. He also showed me the report of Lemaire, the London expert."

"Well, what does he think?" asked Jack, anxiously.

"He is quite of your brother's opinion, and, I may add, of mine, that the man who wrote that direction is the man who filled up and signed the cheque."

"Dr. Roydon? But it is not possible, Herr von Ehrenberg." It was the conclusion to which Jack himself had almost come only a few days previously; but he had pushed the thought from him, partly

for Leah's sake, partly because he could not reconcile it with certain notorious facts.

"It is quite possible, Herr Verelst, and though full proof is not yet forthcoming, I very much fear that Dr. Roydon is guilty of both crimes, and also of a third—the murder of Simon, the bookseller."

"What!" exclaimed Jack, bounding from his chair, almost breathless with astonishment. "You are talking nonsense. It is impossible. At any rate, Roydon is not a common brigand."

"He is worse. He is a man with a dominant idea. However, let me explain. Your surprise is natural. But you have no right to accuse me of talking nonsense until you know the facts. I am not in the habit of talking nonsense, Herr Verelst. The similarity of the handwriting is a key that unlocks many doors. I don't say that Dr. Roydon is the only person who may conceivably have committed these

crimes; on the other hand, he is the only person we know of who could have committed them—fact and probability point in the same direction—and the chances are a thousand to one against anybody else being the culprit. Who else knows all the ins and outs of Balder's bank and Roth's bank? Who else speaks with equal facility German and English? I have also ascertained that only a few months before the forgery Dr. Roydon was staying with his cousin, the banker, near Manchester, that he several times accompanied him to the bank, and had every opportunity of abstracting cheques. I have found out, too, that at the time of the forgery he was away from home."

"How?"

"I wrote from Manchester to the police here, asking them to find out for me. A very simple matter; they had only to inquire of the porter. That he was not recognized

by Balder's people at Manchester, or by Herr Roth here, makes nothing. It is so easy to alter one's appearance. I could come here to-morrow, exchange notes at your counter and greetings with yourself, and you would afterwards take your oath that, whoever else it was, it could not be Von Ehrenberg. About the bank notes, the proceeds of the forgery, the Manchester detectives were not quite so stupid as I thought. All the same, they did not prove themselves equal to the occasion. Roydon, on the other hand, managed matters very well. Within a few hours of getting them he exchanged them for gold, and notes of different denominations, at the Branch Bank of England. He was probably apprehensive that if he took all gold it might excite suspicion. In London he got more gold, also from the Bank of England. One note he appears to have paid at the Manchester Railway Station; another at Cook's office

in London for his ticket to Paris; another on board the steamer by which he travelled to Calais; another at the Gare de Calais. The rest—all but two—he cashed at a money-changer's in Paris, giving his name as Yordon, which showed a lack of invention on the part of the Herr Doctor; it is too much like his own. One of the two I traced to the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs, and found that the manager received it from a self-styled German, who gave the name of Jordon—which in German, you know, is pronounced exactly like Yordon—and the description of whom corresponds to a nicety with the person of the Herr Doctor. The manager, who is a German (though he calls himself a Swiss), had a long talk with him, and has a clear recollection of the incident. There remains only the note received by your brother from Chemnitz, and that I shall inquire about presently. So you see the chain of evidence is pretty

complete as touching the forgery. I wish it were as complete as touching the robbery. But one thing at a time. I mean to know more about that snuff-box before I have done. And now I must ask you a question or two, Herr Verelst."

"Yes," said Jack, uneasily. He was thinking how he should break the shock to Leah. "Ask on."

"I have been told that the Herr Doctor is not a good paymaster—that he does not settle his tradesmen's accounts very punctually, and has shown in other ways that he has not always too much money. Is that so?"

"I know nothing about his tradesmen's accounts, but there is no denying that he has sometimes been rather hard up. All his own fault, though. His books are very valuable, and he is really well off. He could get whatever money he wanted."

"Never mind that now. He kept his banking account with Roth and Son, I believe? How did it stand at the time of the robbery—was the balance on the wrong side or the right side?"

For a moment Jack thought of saying that he had no right to disclose the state of a customer's account, but as such a rejoinder, besides annoying Von Ehrenberg, would have been construed in a sense unfavourable to Roydon, he decided to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

"On the wrong side."

"I thought so. Much?"

"Something like eighteen thousand marks, I think."

"Was the house pressing him for payment?"

"Yes."

"And did he pay?"

"He did—all that we asked him for."

"When?"

"Immediately after his return from Paris."

"That is conclusive. He paid Herr Roth with his own money."

"Perhaps," said Jack, still striving to believe in Roydon's innocence, notwithstanding the convincing facts brought forward by Von Ehrenberg. "But it seems to me that you are overlooking the extreme improbability of Roydon being the criminal, after all. Consider how assiduous he was in his attendance on Herr Roth, and the sympathy he has shown to his family. Consider, too, how unlikely it is that a man of Roydon's attainments, position, and strength of character, a man who could at any moment convert his books into money (I should think his collection is worth at least a hundred thousand marks), how

unlikely it is that such a man would commit robbery and murder—rob his kinsman and murder his benefactor—when he could raise as much money as he needed by the simple process of sending a few score volumes to London or Paris!"

"I have considered, Herr Verelst, and my conclusion is altogether different from yours. I think Dr. Roydon was just the man to act as he has acted. You call him strong. I say he is weak."

"Oh, no, you cannot say that. Whatever else he is, Roydon is not a weak man."

"I beg your pardon. I say he is, and I will prove it. True, he has a passion for old books, and he gratifies it at any cost. But that only shows his weakness. A strong man is master of his passions; Roydon is the slave of a dominant idea. Call a man strong who steals because he

cannot make up his mind to part with a possession which is of no earthly use to him, which merely gratifies a whim! And just as the timid are often the most cruel, so people of fixed ideas, unless their ideas happen to be useful, may be far more dangerous than habitual criminals. Fanatics and enthusiasts, for instance, are nearly always the victims of dominant ideas, and though some may have done good, many have wrought a fearful amount of evil in the world."

"You think Dr. Roydon is mad, then?" said Jack, to whom this was quite a new view of the matter.

"In a measure, I do. All the same, he knew quite well that he was breaking the law, and must take the consequences. If people with fixed ideas were allowed to murder with impunity, all murderers would have fixed ideas."

"That is true. But still—how do you account for Roydon's subsequent anxiety to keep Herr Roth alive, and his kindness to the family?"

"Well, that is rather a puzzle, I admit. You think it would have been more natural for him to finish his work by killing Herr Roth than to keep him alive. But is not this the explanation? When his books are not in question, the Herr Doctor is neither cruel nor unkind. Rather the opposite, I should say. He wanted Herr Roth's money, not his life; and having got the money, he may have desired, as far as he could, to repair the mischief he had done."

"In that case why should you suspect him of murdering old Simon?"

"Ah, that is a different matter. One crime begets another. The Herr Doctor killed the Herr Bookseller to prevent his other crimes from being found out." And

then Von Ehrenberg told what befell when he went to Simon's shop, and expressed the belief that the footmarks on the floor were Roydon's, that he had overheard the conversation, and fearing the journey to Frankfort might result in identifying him as the owner of the snuff-box, he had committed a second murder to conceal the first.

"I do not believe it," said Jack, warmly. "If ever I saw genuine surprise, it was when I told Roydon—here in this office—that Simon had been murdered. And why—if he were guilty—should he have mentioned being in Simon's shop only a short time before the murder was committed? Besides, what could he hope to gain by it? At the best a few days' respite. Simon was not the only man who could be sent to Frankfort. It would have been much more to the purpose if he had murdered you."

"Thank you," answered Von Ehrenberg, politely. "I am very glad he did not. Well, I admit it frankly, the Simon case is not quite as clear as the other. All the same, I have my opinion, and I think when I go to Frankfort, as I propose to do, and interview this antiquary, Loewenstein, I shall learn something about the death's-head snuff-box that will bring its possession home to the Herr Doctor."

"I suppose in the meanwhile you will—take no further step?"

This was a feeler. Jack wanted to give Leah warning.

"I have taken steps already, my dear sir. At this moment" (looking at his watch) "the Herr Doctor is under arrest."

"But he is ill. He is not fit to be removed."

"Oh, yes, he is—in a droshky to the sick ward of the city prison."

"This is surely very sudden, Herr von Ehrenberg. You might have told me of your intention a little sooner."

"I purposely refrained from doing so out of consideration for your position and feelings, my dear Herr Verelst."

"My position! My feelings!"

"Yes," said Von Ehrenberg, taking up his hat and lighting a cigar. "It would have been very painful for you to know that the Herr Doctor was going to be arrested, yet, bound by your promise to me, not to be able to give him, or the beautiful Fräulein, his daughter, a hint of his danger. But the affair has been managed with the utmost delicacy and consideration. No roughness. No men in uniform. Even the domestics will know no more than that the Herr Doctor has driven away in a droshky with two old friends. Good morning, my dear sir."

CHAPTER XV.

THE HAND OF GOD.

Von Ehrenberg was no sooner gone than Verelst hurried off to Halbe Gasse. A strange revulsion had taken place in his feelings, natural enough in the circumstances, perhaps, yet which, nevertheless, both puzzled and annoyed him. So long as Herr Roth's murderer was a person unknown, Jack was hotly indignant against him, and would have regarded his hanging or beheading with a sense of positive satisfaction, if not of actual pleasure. But now that he could no longer resist the conviction that Balder Roydon was the man—a man with whom he had been on terms of familiar friendship—his indignation became a vanishing quantity; he felt almost as much

pity for the assassin as he had once entertained for the victim. For months past Roydon's mind must have been in a terrible state. A man of culture and refinement, and, as his efforts on behalf of Herr Roth proved, of not unkindly disposition, his suffering must have been unspeakable, all the thanks and gratitude of Frau Roth and her family gall and wormwood to his soul. No wonder he went to the house with reluctance. And then there were the ever-present fear of the detection, the gnawing anxiety, the crushing remorse.

Jack understood now why Roydon had aged so much, why his conduct had been so strange, why the old man's death had fevered his brain and disordered his mind. And he had doubtless said things in his delirium that Leah did not like to reveal. What could they be? Did she know the worst? He was mad—nothing could be

more certain; and notwithstanding Von Ehrenberg's ruling, it seemed clear to Jack that the Doctor could not rightly be held responsible for his actions; or any rate, so far as the motive of them was in any way connected with his dominant idea. It might be expedient to restrain him; it could not be just to punish him as murderers for gain are punished.

Outside Roydon's house there was nothing to betoken that anything unusual had happened. The porter greeted Verelst as always, but it was Leah, not Nettschen, who opened the door to him.

"I was going to send for you," she said; "they have taken him."

"I know."

"Already? How?"

He told her all that had passed between Von Ehrenberg and himself, and it then struck him, for the first time, by what a

singular chance the two crimes had been traced—the sending of the wrong letter to Manchester.

"It is my doing," he said.

"And mine. If I had not asked you to forward my letters this would not have happened. I, who have been striving all this time to protect Balder Roydon from the consequences of his madness; you, who desired to help me—we two have brought this to pass. We try to control Providence, and He makes us His instruments."

"You believe in God, then? I have occasionally thought—"

"Yes, I believe in God. But nearly all educated Russians are atheists. I am an exception—perhaps because I was not brought up in the Orthodox Greek Church, and my mother was English. Yes, I believe in God," she answered, gloomily. "Yet I sometimes think that He has handed the

government of the world over to Satan. But why should I? We suffer because it is our destiny; because it is good for us to suffer. The greatest of all virtues, my brother, is resignation."

"And yet you are a rebel!"

"Against man, not against God. Resignation to suffering does not imply submission to tyranny."

Jack looked puzzled. She was getting beyond him.

"But though our people reject the supernatural," she went on, "the Russian character is essentially emotional and religious. We must worship something outside ourselves; either God, an idea, or a man. I prefer God. You must one day read the works of Dostojevsky and Tolstoi, and then you will understand us better. But what is to be done about Roydon? That is the present question."

"You have not told me what happened. How is he, and how did he take it?"

"He was lying there on the sofa when the police came in; as they were very polite, and looked like gentlemen, I had no idea what they wanted or who they were. When the first of them touched him on the shoulder, and said they had come to arrest him, he seemed quite overcome with terror, sprang up, and looked eagerly towards the door, as if he had some thought of trying to escape. But he must have seen at once that it was too late, and, recovering his presence of mind, he turned with quiet dignity to the officer and said he would go with him. 'I have feared this for a long time,' he whispered to me in Russian. 'It is the hand of God.' Then he asked the officer if I might visit him. 'Certainly,' said the officer, 'as often as she likes; we have instructions to treat

you with every indulgence compatible with your safe keeping.' And then he kissed me, and they led him away."

"Do you believe in his guilt?"

"Yes. I have felt sure for some time that he was spending more money than he could come by honestly, and in his delirium the other day he said things that made me fear he had committed some terrible crime, though of what nature I could not make out. But, after what you have told me, I think there can be no doubt that he both forged the cheques and murdered poor Herr Roth. Terrible crime, and he has suffered a terrible chastisement. All that has seemed so strange in his conduct these last few months is now explained."

"But you surely don't think he murdered Herr Simon, too?"

"I don't know. I have heard that there is a fascination in murder. When a man

has once killed a fellow-man he may kill for the pleasure of killing."

"That is madness."

"Madness at the time, yes. Balder Roydon's conduct is comprehensible on no other supposition than that he acted under uncontrollable impulse. Well for him if he had gone mad altogether. I will ask him about Simon. He will tell me the truth."

"We must engage an advocate for his defence."

"Oh! don't. I detest advocates; they are no better than common bravoes. If he is innocent he is quite able to conduct his own defence; if guilty, let him confess, and make whatever atonement he can."

"But, unless he can clear himself of the charge of murdering Simon, I fear they will behead him."

"And would it not be better so?"

"Better so! Do you know what you are saying? Better that he should be beheaded!"

"Oh, yes, I know what I am saying. You forget that Balder Roydon is not one of those unfortunates whose reason is permanently darkened, or who know not right from wrong. He is a man of quick understanding and tender conscience, and in the quietude of his prison he will suffer agonies of shame and remorse. The best thing that could happen to him would be to die soon."

"You are perhaps right, though I am not quite so sure about his conscience, and I certainly should not like him to die on the scaffold. But I do not believe he did murder Simon, and in the case of Herr Roth the jury will either bring in a verdict of manslaughter or the Crown will grant a pardon. When do you intend to see him?"

"As soon as they will let me. I shall apply for an interview to-morrow."

"Will you stay here? In this house, I mean."

"Certainly. Where else can I stay?"

"I thought, perhaps, it might be better for you to stay with the Ashleys."

"With the Ashleys, my unsophisticated brother! Do you think a British chaplain would dare to entertain a murderer's daughter? These people are Philistines, not Christians. Why, Mrs. Ashley would faint with horror at the very idea of such a thing. She is not a bad woman according to her lights, but the god she worships is respectability. I do not expect that either of them will come near me, much less ask me to their house, and I shall be much surprised if anybody else comes. Respectability is as cruel as Nature and the

Decalogue: it visits the sins of the fathers on the children."

"You do not intend to let it be known that you are not Roydon's daughter, then?"

"Of course not. To do so would make it seem as if I disowned him because he is in trouble. I consider that I owe Balder Roydon the duty of a daughter. I am to him in the place of his own child, and the more unfortunate he is, the more I should cling to him. And what greater misfortune can befall a man than that he should do wrong? Until his fate is decided I shall remain here, and give him all the help and comfort in my power."

Jack hinted, as delicately as he could, that if she had need of money his purse was at her disposal.

"You are very good," she said; "I have enough for the present. I shall send the

cook away. Nettschen and I will do everything; we do not eat much, and it will cost us very little to live. But if I do want money, you may be sure that I shall not hesitate to ask my brother."

Then Jack went away, promising to come again on the next evening, by which time she would probably have seen Roydon.

"He is an honest, straightforward Englishman," mused Leah, when Verelst was gone; "not brilliant, perhaps, but better than brilliant—good and sincere. He is a man one could love. Yes, I could love John Verelst; and if . . . . Perhaps I might do more good by defending the cause in Europe than by taking part in the struggle at home. I am sure he would help me. And he loves me. How sad he looked, poor fellow, when I refused him,

and how bravely he bore the disappointment! But this is weakness. If I let my woman's feelings get the better of me I shall be in danger of loving him even as he loves me."

CHAPTER XVI.

VISITORS.

The next day Leah, as she had proposed, went to the prison and saw Dr. Roydon. But that was all. He was in a state of such intense excitement that the doctors more than hinted that unless the greatest care was taken he might not improbably lose his reason. It was only when Leah urged that her presence by his bedside for a few minutes might have a good effect that she was admitted to his room; for he was kept apart from the other patients. But, save a few words of sympathy and an assurance that she would come again soon, conversation was strictly forbidden.

So, when Jack called in the evening, she

had very little to tell him, except that during her absence the police had made a domiciliary visit, turned everything topsy-turvy, and taken away all the Doctor's papers.

"They were looking for evidence, I suppose?" said Leah. "Especially for the snuff-box. I wonder if they found it."

"Did you ever see it?"

"No; and I was not aware such a box existed until you told me. But he had things locked up in his cabinets that I never saw. And that box, if he had it, he would surely keep hidden."

"It is more likely he has destroyed it. I can hardly think he would keep such a compromising piece of evidence in his possession. But there is no telling. I shall, no doubt, learn when Von Ehrenberg returns from Frankfort."

"He has gone, then?"

"He was to have gone yesterday; and I have no doubt he did. Much depends on what he learns there, for he has the idea that the Doctor killed Simon to prevent him from making the very inquiry which Von Ehrenberg has gone to make. In my opinion a most absurd idea, since, even if Roydon be mad, there is, at least, method in his madness, and the murder of Simon, in the circumstances, could not serve his interests in the least. No, the more I think about it, the more I feel sure that, in this case at least, the Doctor is not guilty."

"Who is, then?"

"I wish I knew. It is a mystery, which, perhaps, time and the police may unravel."

Leah was wrong in thinking she would have no callers, for in the week after the Doctor's arrest there came three, not

counting Jack, and all were surprises—the last persons she expected to see.

First came the chaplain, for Mr. Ashley, albeit not exactly a shining light in the Church, and so much in awe of his strong-minded wife that he hardly dared call his soul his own, had the instincts of a gentleman, and when he heard the news, and was sufficiently recovered from the shock it occasioned him to be able to speak, he hinted that it would "only be kind" to call on the poor girl, and meekly suggested that they should do so the next day. On this Mrs. Ashley, with a severe look, inquired if he had "quite lost his senses," and asked what people would think if they were to call at the house of a man that was sure to be hanged, and who, she had always thought would come to no good.

"It is bad enough that you have let him occupy your pulpit," she said. So poor Mr.

Ashley, knowing, by painful experience, the uselessness of argument when his wife had made up her mind, said no more, and went to Halbe Gasse furtively and alone.

"This is very sad, Miss Roydon," he said, kindly, but rather confusedly, for the situation was rather embarrassing; "very sad indeed. There must be some dreadful mistake. I couldn't have believed—I mean it is quite impossible that your father can have committed these—I mean, can have done these things they accuse him of. The English colony must move in the matter. And then there is the Minister. Dr. Roydon is a British subject; he must be protected. And I really have no great confidence in these German tribunals. Their ways are so different from ours. I am sorry Mrs. Ashley could not come with me. But she—the fact is, she is not very well—and the day is cold

—and we thought it better not, you know —better not for her to come out. It is a terrible position for you, my dear, but you must bear up as well as you can. I have no doubt your father will be able to clear himself, and God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, you know. He will help you to support this trial, and whom He loveth He chasteneth, you know. Try to look on it in that light, and all will come right in the end. I will call again; but my position as chaplain—you understand—people are so censorious and uncharitable. If you want anything—if I can do anything for you—just drop me a line. But, perhaps, it would be as well to address me care of the porter, and then there would be no danger of your letter getting astray—I should get it sooner, in fact. And I will speak to the Minister myself. Your father must have a good lawyer—that is it—a

good, sharp lawyer; and I have no doubt his innocence will be—will be triumphantly vindicated. Heaven bless you, my dear; keep up your courage, and I am sure all will be well in the end."

The reverend gentleman's visit, notwithstanding his clumsy attempt at consolation and his make-belief in his quondam friend's innocence, did Leah good.

"The poor old gentleman is a Christian, after all—in a fashion," was her mental comment; "and people are, perhaps, not so selfish as I was beginning to fear."

The next day she had a visit from Helene. Leah could hardly believe her own eyes when Nettschen ushered Herr Roth's daughter into the drawing-room.

"You!" she exclaimed; "you come to see me!"

"Yes," said the girl, taking her hand; "we thought it must be so dreadful for

you to be here all alone; and my mother sorrows so much for my father that she can neither receive anybody nor go out; so I said I would come and tell you that we do not believe it; that though appearances may be against him, we are sure Dr. Roydon is innocent; that he did not —you know what I mean."

"Very well: only too well. But suppose, Helenchen, you knew he was guilty, how then? Would you still have come to see me—a murderer's daughter?"

"Why not? You would be doubly unfortunate then, and therefore still more to be pitied. You would be suffering for a sin you did not commit. It would be more dreadful than losing your father altogether, as I lost mine."

"Heaven bless you, Helenchen; you are a good girl. I did not think anybody

could be so good," cried Leah, with brimming eyes, and, putting her arm round her friend, she led her to a sofa, and the two sat down together, hand in hand.

"Oh! Leah, it is terrible," said Helenchen, so soon as she could speak, for she, too, was weeping. "I think if I were in your place I should die. They are saying all sorts of dreadful things: not only that it was Dr. Roydon who killed my poor father, but that he also murdered old Simon, the bookseller."

"It is not true. The police are making a great mistake. Mr. Verelst thinks so too, and he knows all the facts, and bases his opinion on what the police have told him."

"You have seen Mr. Verelst, then?"

"Several times. I know not what I should do without him. He is my best

friend; if you had not come I should almost say my only one."

"Oh!" said Helenchen. But it was more than a mere ejaculation, rather an involuntary cry of anger and pain; and Leah, looking at the girl's face, saw that her lips were compressed, as if to keep down a rising sob, and that her eyes were troubled. The old jealous feeling, for awhile past dormant, had been kindled afresh.

The Nihilist maiden read her like an open book.

"You like Mr. Verelst, I think," she suggested, recapturing the hand which Helenchen had just withdrawn.

No answer.

"You don't like him, then. Is he not kind?"

"My mother thinks very highly of him, and he has been very kind—to her."

"And I fancy I know somebody who thinks even more highly of him than your mother. Come, Helenchen, dear, be frank with me. You care very much for Verelst."

Again no answer, but the averted head and the tell-tale blush were more significant than words.

"I see it all now. Don't be afraid, you foolish child. Your secret is safe with me. You care very much for him, and you think he comes here to see me, and you naturally don't like it. Well, he does, but only as a friend. We are brother and sister, and shall never be more to each other than brother and sister. Friendships of this sort are very common among Russians. I—I would not have him if he asked me; for I have quite other views, and when this trouble is over I shall return to Russia. And, quite between

ourselves—Promise me you won't tell anybody."

"I promise," said Helenchen, eagerly. "What is it?"

"Well, I am sure there is nothing for you to be unhappy about. Verelst cares more for you than you think. But, lately, he has had much on his mind—the business and many other things; and just now he is sorrowing for your father and much concerned about mine. Yet he cannot help loving you—no man who knows you could. You have only to be patient, and one of these days I shall have the pleasure of congratulating you. But, mind, not a word."

"May I come and see you again?" asked Helenchen, with beaming face, as, a few minutes later, she bade Leah good-bye.

"May an angel come and see me again!

As often as you like, and as often as you can, Helenchen, dear. Say to your mother that I thank her with all my heart for her sympathy and kindness, and that when she can see me I will ask her to let me tell her so myself."

"It is all over now," sighed Leah, as she returned to the solitary room. "No more going back. I have given him up irretrievably. Better so. I have made, at least, one heart lighter; I am stronger to suffer than she is, poor child, and I can give myself altogether to the cause. Yes, yes, it is better so."

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER VISITOR.

SURPRISES are said never to cease; and Leah certainly thought so when, a few days after Helene's visit, there came a ring at the door (rather an unusual event since Dr. Roydon's arrest), and Nettschen informed her that Herr Roth "politely asked" the favour of an interview.

"Herr Roth!" she exclaimed. "Herr Roth is"—dead, she was going to say, but remembering that there was another Herr of the name, she asked Nettschen who she meant.

"Herr Art-Student Roth, son of the late Herr Banquier Roth," answered the girl with characteristic precision.

"Show him in, Nettschen," said her mistress, wondering what the young fellow could want. Surely he, too, had not come to offer his sympathy and express his belief in the Doctor's innocence!

Hermann was shown in accordingly, and in his suit of sober black he looked almost respectable, notwithstanding his hacked and hairy face. His manner was, moreover, quiet and subdued, as beseemed a man who wore mourning, and had only just lost his father; for albeit the young fellow had counted on the old man's death, and the removal of a restraint, and the inheritance of a fortune materially mitigated the acuteness of his sorrow, he was not without qualms of conscience, nor could he help feeling that he had so far played a very unworthy part in the world, and little deserved the good luck which had befallen him.

"You are surprised to see me?" he said to Leah, making a low bow, and holding his crape-bound hat with both hands.

"Very much so," she returned. "Won't you take a chair?"

Hermann sat down, cleared his throat—and nothing more.

"He wants to say something that he cannot get out," she thought, and by way of giving him a lift asked after his mother and sisters.

"My mother is still suffering very much, and refuses to be comforted," he answered, in a hollow voice which he deemed meet for the occasion. "She will neither go out nor see anybody; but Mathilde and Helenchen are pretty well—as well as can be expected." (A pause.) "I am not surprised that you are surprised to see me, and I should not have come—the fact

is that I have come because I have something to tell you—something very important—"

"Yes, Herr Hermann, what is it?" said Leah, beginning to feel curious, and seeing that he was in danger of again sticking fast.

"I hope you don't think your father's arrest is my doing, Fräulein?"

"That is asking a question, not giving information," returned Leah, with a smile. "No, I don't think so at all. It was the doing of the Government."

"Yes, the arrest and prosecution were ordered by the public prosecutor. We had nothing to do with it, and I am sure that he is wrong. I do not believe that Dr. Roydon did murder my father. Appearances may be rather against him just now, perhaps, but I have no more doubt of his innocence than my own."

This was not true; the public prose-

cutor had informed him of all the facts of the case, and Hermann had come to a very definite opinion on the subject.

"All the same," he continued, after a short pause, and seeming to gather confidence as he went on—"all the same; and whatever may be the issue, your position is a very painful one—deprived of your father, deserted by your friends, and compelled to bear an opprobrium you have not deserved."

"I do not admit that I am deserted by my friends; but never mind that—what then?" interrupted Leah, rather sharply. She disliked this beating about the bush, and wanted the young fellow to come to the point. "Do you think the opprobrium would be more easily borne if it were more deserved?"

"It would be more easily borne if there was somebody who could share it with

you—somebody who could defend your reputation and punish your slanderers."

"My reputation stands in no need of defence, Herr Roth. What mean you? Who would defend my reputation—you?"

"If you would allow me."

"In what character?"

"The character of your betrothed lover. Ever since I first saw you I have loved you, Fräulein, loved you with all my heart and soul. I did not speak before, because I was poor and dependent, but now I can offer you position and fortune. I know it is not quite the thing—not seemly, you know—to talk of love so soon after my poor father's death, and in ordinary circumstances I should have allowed a proper time to elapse. But it makes me so unhappy to think of you here all alone and unprotected, that I thought you would excuse me—and—and take pity on me."

"And do you mean to say, Hermann Roth, that you would engage yourself to the daughter of a man who is accused of killing your father, and that father hardly cold in his grave? Suppose Dr. Roydon is found guilty?"

"That would make no difference. I should love you all the same."

"It would make a difference to me, though. But under no circumstances could I return your love, Herr Roth. It is impossible; think no more about it."

"Why should it be impossible? I know I have not been what I ought to be—that I am not worthy of your love. Yes, I will freely admit it, and humbly confess my faults. I have wasted a great deal of time and drunk a great deal of beer. But I have now turned over a new leaf, and will be everything you could wish. I swear I will; and I can render you a very important service."

"What service?"

"I can prove that your father is not guilty of old Simon's murder; and that is by far the more serious charge of the two: for his efforts to undo—to save my father's life will, as the public prosecutor himself admits, count much in Dr. Roydon's favour."

"Why, you said just now that you did not believe him guilty!"

"Nor do I, but the jury may be of a different opinion."

"What is it you know, Herr Roth? What can you prove?"

"Will you accept my love, and become my bride?"

"No."

"Why, then, should I tell you my secret?"

"I see," said Leah, scornfully; "you would force me by threats into acceptance of an offer of marriage. Well, this is my

answer:—If you could show me, beyond all doubt, that you were able to save my father's life, I would rather let him die than take you for my husband, and I am sure Dr. Roydon would approve of my decision. For life is not everything. There are things much more precious—honour, duty, self-respect, truth. The very fact that, for purposes of your own, you are ready to withhold evidence which would clear an innocent man of a capital charge, proves that you are unworthy of any honest woman's love or any honourable man's friendship. I am very sorry. Love is beyond our control—I could not love you if I would; but if only for your mother's and sister's sake I should like to hold you in respect, and think of you as a man of honour; and I do believe that you have it in your power to become one even yet. Think of your mother in her affliction, and try to be to her what a son ought to be."

During this discourse Hermann looked as if he could not quite make up his mind whether to be angry or abashed; then he made as if he was going to speak, but, thinking better of it, he rose from his chair, and walked out of the room without a word, without even the ordinary leave-taking.

When Verelst came, as he did, a little later, Leah told him what had passed.

"Confound the fellow," exclaimed Jack, in a rage; I'll—I'll wring his neck!"

"He is a strong young man. I don't think you would find that very easy," said Leah, quietly. "And if you interfere he might challenge you, and they say he is the best fencer in Dresden."

"I don't care. I have been taking lessons in fencing, and I can shoot pretty straight."

"You are letting your indignation get the better of your judgment, my brother.

Apart from the impossibility of your fighting poor Frau Roth's son, you could not quarrel with Hermann simply because he has offered me marriage. Indeed, I should not have mentioned the circumstance to you at all if it had not been for his saying that he could clear Roydon of the charge of murdering Simon."

"You are right. I was talking at random; but when I think of that cub trying to frighten you into promising to marry him it makes my blood boil. What can he know? I hope it is not he who killed Simon."

"If he did it is not likely he would tell."

"Not very, I think. The question is whether he knows something, or merely wants to make you believe he does. Anyhow, he has said so much that he will have to say more. I must speak to Von Ehrenberg. He will find a way of compelling Mr. Hermann to be more explicit."

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT VON EHRENBERG FOUND OUT.

A FEW days later Roydon had become so much better that Leah was allowed to talk to him—in one sense, without restraint—but as a warder was always present at their interviews, and they were expected to converse in the only language the man was supposed to know, a frank exchange of confidences was rendered somewhat difficult. The difficulty was, however, overcome by a "tip" of a thaler piece, which converted the man into an accomplished linguist, and made him imagine that he understood English and Russian quite as well as German.

Leah asked the Doctor, straight out, whether he was guilty or not. As to the forgery in Manchester, and the robbery at Roth's bank he replied evasively, saying only that he had not killed Herr Roth; but in the matter of Israel Simon, he asserted most positively that he was innocent.

"All that I know," he said, "I have already told. I was in his shop a little before six, bought that copy of the 'Rerum Germaniarum,' paid him for it, and then went away. As you know, and as Nettschen and the porter can both testify, I was home by half-past."

This was quite true, and Leah believed him. As for the other crimes laid to his charge, however, she made no attempt to conceal her belief in his guilt, and pressed him to make a clean breast of it.

"I know you were swayed by an almost

irresistible impulse; that your passion for books had become a monomania; and it is not for me to judge or condemn you," she said. "What is done cannot be undone, but, if you are culpable, would it not be better and nobler to admit your fault than attempt to deny it?"

Roydon maintained a moody silence.

"It would not only relieve your mind—anybody can see how terribly you suffer; it is written in your face—but I am convinced it would be the better policy. Verelst is of the same opinion."

"How so—what do you mean?"

"Well, the police are ferreting everything out, and they think they have already obtained nearly enough evidence to convict you;" and then Leah told him what Von Ehrenberg had found out—of his visit to Frankfort and proposed visit to Chemnitz—and urged how much a frank

and full confession would tell in his favour, and, in all probability, mitigate the severity of his punishment.

"Why will you assume my guilt? Let them prove it. I tell you I did not kill Roth."

And this was all Leah could get out of him. Yet she had evidently made an impression, and was not without hope that he would, sooner or later, see that the course she recommended was not alone the only right course, but the one that would best serve his interests.

Roydon was several times interrogated privately by the examining judge, who, despite his mistakes, was as confident and conceited as ever. But in the Doctor he found more than his match. Never, he declared, in all his experience, had he had to do with so obstinate and intractable a prisoner. To every question he put, Roy-

don gave always one of two answers, either "I have nothing to say—I reserve my defence;" or "I did not kill Herr Roth." When asked about Simon, he referred the magistrate to the statement he had made at their first interview, and to that he stuck through thick and thin. It was in vain that the magistrate exhorted him to give explicit answers, and said again and again that his refusal would be construed unfavourably both by the jury and judge.

"That may be," answered Roydon; "but as I know your object is to ensnare me in my talk, and that you want to utilize my answers for your own purposes, I shall give no other answer than that I reserve my defence—not if you examine me a hundred times. What I have to say I shall say to the court."

In the end the magistrate gave up the task in despair, and a day was fixed for

Balder Roydon's trial; but he refused either to see a lawyer or engage an advocate.

Meanwhile Von Ehrenberg returned from his journey to Frankfort, as to the main object of which he had not been successful. Aaron Lowenstein, the Frankfort antiquary, had died a few months previously, and his successor possessed no special knowledge of snuff-boxes in general or the death's-head snuff-box in particular. If the old man had been alive, he said, he could almost certainly have given Herr von Ehrenberg the information he required, for he had a great collection of snuff-boxes (dispersed at his death), and, as reference to his books showed, had several times had dealings with Herr Dr. Roydon, of Dresden.

To make up for this disappointment the criminal investigator came across a curious and important piece of evidence at Hof, in

Bavaria, where he stayed a night on his way back. While amusing himself by turning over the pages of the travellers' book of the Hirsch Hotel, his attention was arrested by the name "Jordan," written in the same hand as the same name in the travellers' book of the Hotel des Ambassadeurs in Paris, which he had traced to Roydon. The date, moreover, corresponded with the Doctor's departure from Dresden, and the innkeeper and chambermaid's statements left no doubt that he had doubled back from Hof to the Saxon capital. They remembered him from the fact that, although he was obviously not a commercial traveller, he had remained at the Hirsch a whole day and part of two nights—a sufficiently remarkable circumstance, Hof being so dreary a place that nobody stops there an hour longer than he can possibly help. Another noteworthy fact was that he returned in

the same direction whence he came—north, as they could tell by the time of his arrival and departure, the Hirsch being close to the railway. He left at an unearthly hour in the morning, and the night porter, who called him and carried his baggage to the station, was very much struck by the fact that, whereas the Herr came with a white head he went away with a black one, an incident which caused him to remark afterwards to the chambermaid that, although he had heard of people's hair turning white in a night, he had never heard of anybody's turning black in the same space of time.

It was easy to reckon from these indications at what hour Roydon would arrive in Dresden, and Von Ehrenberg subsequently ascertained that about the time the train by which the Doctor travelled reached its destination, a man, who gave the name of Jordan, left two pieces of

baggage in the luggage depôt and fetched them away on the same day, which was the day of the robbery.

"When the thing was done and he had sold the bonds, he must have gone straight to Paris," said Von Ehrenberg, after he had related all this to Verelst. "The case is almost complete, Herr Verelst. I have only to find the snuff-box, and then the Herr Doctor will not have a loophole."

"The search resulted in nothing, then?"

"No. The only snuff-box in the house was a plain gold one, with the Russian imperial cypher engraved on the lid."

"Ah, that is the one the Empress Catherine gave to Voltaire. What did you do with it?"

"Left it where it was, of course. But I am wrong; the search was not quite resultless; we found the manuscript Koran."

"What Koran?"

"A famous and very valuable manuscript copy of the Koran, which, together with several valuable books, was some time ago stolen from a public library in Berlin. One of the librarians was suspected of conniving at the thefts, if not actually committing them, and the case was put into my hands for investigation. After making some inquiries, I came to the conclusion that some of the missing books had found their way to Dresden, and as Dr. Roydon was a well-known bibliophile, I thought he was as likely to have them as anybody else. But as I was not at all sure, and direct inquiry might defeat my object—since, if the Herr Doctor knew they were stolen, he would naturally not be very communicative, and I did not want to raise an international question by forcibly searching the house of a British subject on mere suspicion—I

tried to work the business through you and Herr Roth, and that failing, through Simon, and a sly old fellow he was. He ascertained that the Herr Doctor had one of the missing books—that with the Latin title I mentioned to you.

"That was when you posed as a bibliophile," said Jack, drily.

"Exactly. I have posed in a good many characters in my time; why, my dear sir, I once posed as a parson and preached a sermon!"

"Have you been to Chemnitz?"

"No; what is the use? We cannot indict the Herr Doctor here in Dresden for a crime committed in Manchester, and we have already quite enough evidence to show that he was the owner of the death's-head snuff-box. It would be more satisfactory, though, if we could find the snuff-box. But he won't answer a single question,

either about that, or the manuscript Koran, or anything else. It will be all the worse for him in the end, though."

Jack then spoke of the other case, and mentioned what Hermann Roth had told Leah.

"Ah! Is that indeed so?" said the criminal investigator, nodding his head gravely three several times. "That has a very strange look. I must see Herr Hermann, and ask him a question or two, which I think he will find it to his interest to answer. Well, I have never said that the Simon affair was very clear as against the Herr Doctor. There is room for all sorts of possibilities, and now that I am back in Dresden, and have a little time to spare, I shall make further inquiry. Perhaps Herr Hermann can furnish me with a clue. I shall interview that young gentleman at once."

CHAPTER XIX.

LAYING DOWN THE LAW.

Hermann Roth was much easier to deal with than Von Ehrenberg expected. Leah's rebuke had touched the young fellow to the quick, and he made no difficulty about telling the Berlin detective all he knew. His evidence was very simple, yet very important. Passing along Pirnaesche Strasse a few minutes before seven on the night of the murder, he saw in Simon's window a book which struck his fancy, and, stepping in, he bought it from the old man himself at the price of three marks.

"I have the book at home," said Hermann, "if that is material."

But it was not material. The material fact was that Simon had been seen in his shop at seven o'clock alive and well. If this were true, Dr. Roydon could not possibly be the murderer, for it was in evidence that he reached his own house at half-past six, and did not leave it until the following morning.

"If it is true!" thought Von Ehrenberg. "And why not? The young Herr has no interest in bearing false witness for the benefit of the man who murdered his father, and as the English lady has rejected his suit, he would not be likely to tell a lie in her interest. Yes, the chances are very much in favour of its being true. We have clearly been on a wrong tack. Well, we must try another. Very disappointing, though; for it did really look as if the Herr Doctor was the man. Good for him that he is not. He will keep his

head on his shoulders this time. It will be a verdict of murder with extenuating circumstances."

Sitting in the Hotel de Saxe, smoking his after-dinner cigar, and turning the matter over in his mind, Von Ehrenberg had one of the happy thoughts which he called an inspiration.

"Ten thousand thunders, the droshky driver!" he exclaimed—or rather would have done, had he been alone—"he must know more than he has told, and if he does not he ought to. Unless I am very much out in my reckoning he must have reached Simon's door almost at the same time the murder was committed. I'll have him arrested and questioned, and his house searched forthwith."

Two hours later the unfortunate driver was in custody, and very frightened he seemed. Von Ehrenberg charged him

roundly with the murder, and when the man frantically protested his innocence, promised to let him off if he would tell all he knew. On this the driver said that, just as he alighted from his cab to knock at Simon's door, a man, whom he did not recognize, came out of the shop, and, after a moment's hesitation, as if he were thinking what to do, took from his pocket a hundred-mark note (5*l.*), and gave it to him, saying, at the same time, "Take this and keep a still tongue, and you shall have more."

A hundred marks was a good deal for a poor cabby; he did keep a still tongue, and had been rewarded accordingly. Every week or ten days the stranger came to his stand, dropped five or ten marks into his hand, and then walked silently away. Who he was or where he lived cabby had not the most remote idea.

On this the driver was released, but, to test the truth of his story, and, if possible, to catch the delinquent, two detectives were told off to watch the droshky continually. After a few days' observation their patience was rewarded, and the culprit captured. He proved to be a clerk in a commercial establishment. Simon's watch was found at his lodgings, and being foolish enough, when under secret examination, to answer questions and make statements, he quickly involved himself in a fatal web of falsehoods and contradictions, and was badgered by the examining magistrate until he admitted his guilt, and made full confession. The idea of murdering Simon, he said, had been suggested to him by the robbery at Roth's bank, and the facility with which the murderer escaped with his plunder. But Traugott Waldteufel, for so he was called, profited

by his crime hardly at all; most of the plunder he had paid as hush money to the driver, and the watch he had not ventured to sell.

"The Pirnaesche Strasse Mystery," as it was called, being cleared up, the only charge on which Balder Roydon could be arraigned in Dresden was the murder and robbery of Heinrich Roth.

A few days before the trial the Doctor changed his mind about employing counsel, and sent for a lawyer, who, by his instructions, summoned as witnesses several eminent medical men, including Doctors Krankenheiler and Siebold.

When Roydon appeared in the dock he made a decidedly favourable impression both on his judges and the public. His grave and intellectual face was so pale, his expression so contrite and sad, his hair so white, and his bearing so fine a combina-

tion of modesty and dignity, that people, entirely forgetting poor Herr Roth and his sufferings, gave all their sympathy to the man who had taken his property and compassed his death.

Asked to plead, the prisoner said that he pleaded guilty to the charge of robbing Heinrich Roth, but his answer to the charge of murdering him was "Not guilty."

Then, with bent head and in a broken voice, the unhappy man tried to explain his conduct and extenuate his offence. A fatal passion for collecting books, he said, had been his ruin. Some influence outside himself—an influence which he found it impossible to resist—was perpetually tempting him to buy and buy without end. He bought beyond his means, and once a rare edition was in his possession, he simply could not sell it; his books

became a part of his soul, and in order to avoid the dire alternative of parting with them he committed two terrible crimes—a forgery and a robbery.

Looking back now from the enforced calmness of his prison life, he could see how mad and wicked and criminal he had been; yet he would not have the court think him worse than he really was. He had never meant to take Herr Roth's life; he intended merely to stun him, and but for a miscalculation on his part, and an unexpected movement on the part of Herr Roth, the blow would have done him no great harm. And, as a matter of fact, the blow was not fatal; the cause of death was clearly the trephining, and for that reason he did not plead guilty to the charge of murder. This, he thought, he should be able to prove from the evidence of the medical gentlemen whom he had subpœnaed.

For the rest, he threw himself on the mercy of the court, and would bear, without murmuring, any penalty with which they might think fit to visit him, even to the forfeiture of his life. Death itself would be preferable to the agony he had lately endured. It was beyond the power of words to describe his sufferings. For months he had not enjoyed an hour's sound sleep or one moment's peace of mind. He regretted most bitterly that the trephining operation had failed of success, and all that he could do in the way of atonement he would. Whatever might be the issue of the trial, the books which had wrought his ruin he would never look upon again. He should give directions for his library to be sold, and out of the proceeds of the sale the Roth family would be paid the amount he had taken and the money he still owed them. He should also make good the sum of

which he had defrauded the Manchester banking house. He regarded his life as being practically at an end; he had already tasted the bitterness of death, and was fully prepared for whatever fate might befall him.

Roydon was fortunate in having a sympathetic judge and a sentimental jury. The President of the Tribunal, contrary to the wont of German judges (who, before summing up was abolished, in 1879, generally assumed a prisoner's guilt, and did their utmost to convict him), summed up as much in his favour as he could. He laid great stress on the unsordidness of the prisoner's motives, drew a fine moral distinction between crime resulting from mere greed and wrong-doing caused by a passion for books—a passion with which, being himself somewhat of a bibliophile, he could sympathize, and hinted that

Roydon was so far a monomaniac that it was hardly right to hold him altogether responsible for his actions.

The judge, nevertheless, considered it his duty to point out that, from a purely technical standpoint, Roydon's plea of not guilty was untenable. He admitted having struck Herr Roth on the head, and when a man, while engaged in the commission of a felony, injured another so that he died, even though the injured person did not die immediately, even though death might be hastened by a surgical operation, he must be held guilty of intentional homicide. So, at least, said the law, albeit he was quite prepared to allow that in certain easily conceivable circumstances it might be very hard law. None of the medical gentlemen who gave evidence had been able to say that if Herr Roth had not been trephined he would not have lived, and

Dr. Krankenheiler was very strongly of opinion that the efficient cause of death was much less the blow than the operation. Having given his opinion, and explained the legal bearings of the case, the President left the issue in the hands of the jury, with every confidence that, while vindicating the majesty of the law, they would do no injustice to the unhappy gentleman who awaited their verdict, and give him the benefit of any doubt they might entertain.

The jury gave effect to this recommendation in a way which the President himself probably did not expect. They acquitted the prisoner of the charge of murder, found him guilty of robbery only, and allowed him the benefit of extenuating circumstances.

In this verdict the court fully concurred, and having regard to the prisoner's

state of mind, his frank confession and evident contrition, the President considered that justice would be sufficiently vindicated by a sentence of three years' imprisonment.

CHAPTER XX.

"KILLING NO MURDER."

"HE has got off a great deal easier than I expected," said Verelst to Von Ehrenberg, when they met outside the courthouse.

"And a great deal easier than I expected. It makes me think of your Oliver Cromwell."

"Oliver Cromwell! What on earth has he to do with it?"

"Did not a certain colonel write a pamphlet against him, called 'Killing no Murder'? To show, I believe, that putting the Protector to death would be rather a good action than otherwise. Well, these judges and this jury have decided, in effect,

that killing poor Herr Roth was no murder. And those doctors, they are blockheads. What matters it whether that crack on the skull or the operation was the immediate cause of death? The ultimate cause was unquestionably the Herr Doctor's hammer, and he is, beyond doubt, a murderer. He is also, in a measure, morally responsible for the murder of old Simon. They never thought of that."

"Was it done with a hammer, then?"

"Almost certainly. And a hammer with a short heft and a heavy head, just the weapon for the purpose, was found in his rooms. However, three years' imprisonment, the disgrace of a conviction, and the dispersion of his books, is a terrible punishment for a man like the Herr Doctor. As likely as not he will die before his time is out. The best excuse for him, as I said before, is that he was under the influence

of a dominant idea. All the same, he is very clever. The point he made about the trephine being the cause of Roth's death was really fine. It told with the jury if not with the judge. I wonder if he had that in view when he proposed the operation? He did well, too, to confess. Yes, a very artful man is the Herr Doctor."

"You don't believe in the sincerity of his repentance, then?"

"Well, I would not go so far as to say that. The human mind is strangely constituted, my friend, and analysis of motives, even when we know all the facts, is not always easy. There is nothing as to which people make more mistakes. In my opinion the Herr Doctor is more tender-hearted than honest. His conscience did not trouble him much about forging the cheque and stealing the bonds. The people he

robbed were both rich, and could well afford the loss, he might argue. But I think, you know, he really did not mean to kill Herr Roth, that when he found how much he had hurt him, he was truly sorry, and what with remorse and fear of detection, suffered quite as much as he says. But he knows the worst now, and it is always a relief to know the worst. And that reminds me—there is one thing I should much like to know—what has become of the snuff-box?"

"He has destroyed it, of course. You may be sure of that."

"I am not at all sure of that, Herr Verelst. Collectors of his stamp don't destroy things. I will ask him. Now that he knows the worst he has nothing to conceal."

Von Ehrenberg did ask him. On the following day he went to the gaol and saw

Roydon, who, being still out of health, was treated with more indulgence than ordinary prisoners.

"You want to know what has become of the snuff-box?" said the Doctor, smiling the first time for many weeks. "Why, you have seen it, or at any rate some of the police have, and it is now in my pocket."

"Nonsense! Why, you were searched in my presence, and if any of the police had seen the box, I am sure they would have told me."

"They did see it, all the same. Since I was threatened with brain fever, I have suffered much from nervous headache, and Doctor Oxenbein thought that an occasional pinch of snuff might do me good, so I got my daughter to bring the box, and had it filled. Here it is." (Producing a box.)

"Why, this is not the *memento mori*

box. It is the box said to have been presented to Voltaire by the Empress Catherine, and here is the imperial cipher."

"Exactly. Allow me," and Roydon taking the box in his hand, passed it by a rapid movement behind his back, and lo! there appeared on the lid the skull and cross-bones, and the *memento mori*, exactly as described by Hector Verelst and Herr Roth.

"I see. But what is the trick?" said the investigator, looking rather glum, for he felt that his failure to find out the trick, as he called it, was a slur on his reputation.

Roydon showed him. The box had double lids, interchangeable at pleasure by touching a spring; but the mechanism was so cunningly contrived as almost to defy detection.

"Where did you get it?" asked Von Ehrenberg.

"From Aaron Loewenstein, of Frankfort-on-the-Maine."

"I thought so. And you were in Simon's house that night, and you heard me arrange with him to go to Frankfort?"

"I did."

"So I was not very far wrong, after all. And would you mind telling me what sort of snuff you used when you—you know what I mean?"

"I think I do. Common snuff, mixed with a pungent substance of the nature of pepper. I brought it with me from America."

"No poison—no stupefying stuff?"

"Not a particle."

"The doctors were right, then. I think you made a mistake, though, in

showing that device and motto. I know why you did it—to distract your victim's attention, and set the police looking for something they were not likely to find. All the same, from an artistic standpoint, it was a mistake."

"Very likely," said Roydon, sadly. "But I made a greater mistake than that, Herr von Ehrenberg, or I should not be here now."

What that mistake was he did not say, but Von Ehrenberg guessed, and so, perhaps, will the reader.

Jack sent an account of the trial and the result to Hector, who communicated it in turn to Mr. Balder. But it did not get into the English papers, for the German papers, as they often do in criminal cases, had described the prisoner by his initials only, and outside Dresden very few people knew that Dr. Roydon

had been arraigned on a capital charge, and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. This was a great relief to Mr. Balder, who was most anxious that his cousin's delinquencies should not become the town's talk.

"I had no great confidence in Roydon," he said; "he was too much of a rolling stone for me; but I never thought he would rob a bank."

In Mr. Balder's opinion, robbing a bank was the very extremity of human wickedness."

"If I had known who was the forger, I should certainly not have dismissed you, Hector, rule or no rule," continued the old banker; "and you have suffered in another way, too—by these rumours, I mean—and, to tell the truth, I fear that it is rather my fault."

"Yours, Mr. Balder?"

"I am afraid so. It was in this way. That London detective—I forget the fellow's name—suggested that you might have forged the cheque yourself. I did not believe him, of course, and I said so; but I told Baxendale, and it seems he rather did believe it, and, what was worse, did not keep his belief to himself—actually told his wife. He might as well have told the town-crier. I only found this out the other day, or I should have let you know, and tried to stop the thing sooner. I really don't see what I can do, though, short of asking the *Guardian* and the *Examiner* to print the whole story, and I would not have that for five thousand pounds. But I will do something else, Hector, that I daresay will please you better. It is time Baxendale retired; when a banker begins telling things out of doors, above all to his wife,

he is not fit for his place. He shall retire, and you shall have his place—manager under me at, say, two thousand a year. I don't think your cheque-changing business is doing any better for you than that. Liquidate it, and come here, and if you have any customers worth anything, bring them with you. They shall have all the facilities you think they deserve, and you can pass all your bills over to us 'without recourse.' I don't think you have many bad ones."

Hector Verelst was a prudent man; he did not often mistake the shadow for the substance, and he saw at a glance all the advantages of "Old Billy's" proposal. His "cheque-changing business" was not making him nearly two thousand a year, and even if it had been, the same sum paid punctually month by month by

Balder and Baxendale, would not only be surer, but earned with far less anxiety and risk. Moreover, his return to the bank as manager would be the most effectual way of silencing his traducers. The house could give no stronger proof of their confidence in his integrity, and their disbelief in the stories which had been circulated to his discredit, than making him manager.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Mr. Balder, after a short pause, during which Hector had turned the matter over in his mind. He was nothing if not deliberate.

"That it is a handsome offer, and I gratefully accept it—on two conditions."

"Conditions? I don't like conditions. I prefer plain answers."

"You shall have a plain answer. One condition is that my brother, who is also

my partner, is willing to let the business be liquidated, and our partnership dissolved; the other that my engagement shall be for a fixed term. I should not like to give up my enterprise, modest as it is, for a few months' tenure of office as your manager."

"I like your caution, Hector; it augurs well for your efficiency in your new post. How long would you like to make it."

"Suppose we say five years?"

"Five years let it be, then. And I don't think Jack is likely to prove a stumbling-block. He seems to have got hold of the right end of the stick at Dresden. I don't suppose he is actually dying to come back to Manchester. And look here! Roydon is going to pay us back that eighteen hundred pounds. It is so much to the good; we wrote it off long since, and as it has been recovered through

your brother's instrumentality, it is only fair that he should have salvage. He shall have twenty-five per cent.—when we get the money. That will, perhaps, help to reconcile him to the loss of his interest in your cheque-changing business. Is it agreed?"

"It is."

"Good. Get your affairs liquidated, and come to us as soon as you like."

Mr. Balder was right. Jack made no objection to the proposed winding-up of the firm of Verelst Brothers. He congratulated Hector on his good fortune, and, as for himself, declared that he had not the slightest desire to return to Manchester; he preferred a place where the sun shone occasionally, and intended to stay where he was, until circumstances compelled him to go somewhere else.

CHAPTER XXI.

AVE CÆSAR! MORITURI TE SALUTANT.

Acting under Balder Roydon's instructions, John Verelst had the Doctor's furniture disposed of in Dresden, and his books, pictures, and antiquities consigned to London for sale by public auction. Out of the proceeds were to be paid the Doctor's debts, including those due to the Roth family, and Balder and Baxendale; a hundred pounds was to be given to his adopted daughter at once, and thereafter an allowance of a hundred and fifty a year.

When the furniture was sold, about a fortnight after the trial, Leah told Jack

that she intended to return forthwith to Russia. He urged her once more to reconsider her decision.

"It is no use, brother," she said, quietly, yet very firmly; "my mind is made up. Ten days hence I shall be in the thick of the fight."

"You will make that terrible journey all alone?"

"It is not so very terrible. If I had nothing worse than that to encounter, I would promise to be back in Dresden on a certain day, or give you a rendezvous in St. Petersburg or Moscow for next autumn But as it happens, I am not going alone. A young girl, now at Geneva—Anna Paulovna Paskiewitch, she is called—wants also to return, and we have agreed to meet in Berlin, and travel in company."

"Is she, too— ?"

"Yes, she is also what you would call a

Nihilist—that is to say, she was compromised in the revolutionary movement, but managed to get away, and has now been in Geneva nearly a year. But she is tired of the dreary inaction of life in exile, and has resolved to throw herself once more into the struggle, come what may."

"I am sorry for her. What do her friends say?"

"Her family, do you mean? She does not communicate with them; not for her sake, but for theirs. Her father is a retired army officer, and the mere fact of his daughter writing him a letter, if it got known, would certainly involve the loss of his pension, perhaps of his liberty."

"But it would not be his fault. A man need not write a letter unless he likes, and I don't see how he can prevent people from writing to him."

"That does not matter. If the police

found in Colonel Paskiewitch's possession —in his letter-box, or in the post-office, and correspondence is not sacred in Russia—if they found a letter from his Nihilist daughter, they would assume that he was in regular correspondence with her, and act accordingly."

"That means, I suppose, that they would find him lodgings at the Czar's expense?"

"Yes, and probably send him eventually to Siberia; or, what is far worse, to some wretched place on the shores of the White Sea. I have known of people being arrested and imprisoned because an enemy had put compromising papers or pamphlets into their letter-boxes and then denounced them to the police."

"Infamous!"

"Oh, yes, it is infamous; and if it costs the lives of a whole generation, the despotism which does these things must

be destroyed; and though I may not live to see it, Russia shall yet be free."

"Live to see it! Why not? You are young; you are in the first bloom of youth."

"Yes, I am young—as you say, in the first bloom of youth. But Nihilists have very short lives, brother."

Jack made no answer. Leah, he could see, had a foreboding that she was going to her death, and his soul was troubled within him.

A little while afterwards he asked if there was no danger of herself and her friend falling into the hands of the police as soon as they reached the frontier.

"Not the least," she replied. "Our papers will be all in order—we shall take care of that—and the police cannot detain a whole trainful of passengers until their passports are verified. The danger only begins when we take an active part in the

movement, and then we may be arrested at any moment, or escape capture for months, perhaps for years."

"I shall go with you as far as Berlin," said Jack.

"Thank you very much; but there is not the least need; and whether we part here or there, it will be the same thing."

"I will go. Indulge me, at least, in this."

Leah made no further objection, and when the time came he went with her to the station, registered her luggage, and, in order that they might be free from interruption, engaged a *coupé*. She was quite calm, and talked cheerfully about indifferent subjects the greater part of the way, probably with a view to keep up her companion's courage, for he was desperately low-spirited and put in only an occasional word. But he had a question to ask, and as they neared Berlin he asked it.

"I am not going to urge my suit again," he said; "I do not think it would be of any use; and to do so now, when you are going to risk your liberty and your life in a forlorn hope, would seem selfish and ignoble. But I should like to know—it would be a melancholy satisfaction for me—I would like to know whether, if this had not happened—if you had not felt it your duty to return to Russia, I mean—whether you could have loved me as I love you?"

"I am sorry you have revived the subject; it would have been better not," said Leah, gravely; "but since you ask me, I will answer. I could have loved you, and been to you all you wish. And now let this pass. Forget that you have ever thought of me as other than a dear sister. But I have one request—one last request—to make, which I entreat you, as you love me, to grant."

"What is it? So asked, there is nothing I would not do, Leah."

"Transfer the love you have offered me to Helene Roth. You will, perhaps, say it is impossible, and just now perhaps it is. Yet time works wonders, and knowing that this is my earnest wish, I might almost say my dying wish, and that Helenchen is a good girl, who deserves your love, and whom your love would make happy, I feel persuaded that, in the end, you will love her—not, perhaps, with the fire of a first passion, but with the enduring affection that comes of sympathy and esteem. I had a long talk with her the other day. Her character, like yours, has been developed and strengthened by the troubles and experience of the last few months. She will make you a noble wife, and a true helpmate, dear brother. Try to love her

for herself, but also for my sake and your own."

"It is imp—I— mean I cannot think of it now. I can think only of you," said Jack, in a broken voice. "But when —a little later I will try to do as you wish."

Anna Paulovna met them at the station. Though Leah had described her as a young girl, she was much younger looking than Verelst had expected. Fair and fragile, with golden hair and blue eyes, her appearance was almost childlike. At the utmost she could not be more than eighteen or nineteen.

"A lamb going to the slaughter!" thought Jack.

The three dined together, and Leah promised Jack that, albeit her movements would be uncertain and correspondence difficult—since, though letters might be

posted, it was by no means certain they would reach their destination—she would contrive, somehow or other, to inform him occasionally how she fared; and if any harm befell her, he would be sure, sooner or later, to know.

And then he got their tickets, looked after their baggage, went with them to the train, "tipped" the guard, and found them comfortable places.

Leah preserved her outward calm, but when Jack kissed her for the last time, he saw that her eyes were brimming with tears.

"Kiss Anna, too," she said; "I am your sister, and she is mine, and we are both bent on the same errand, and engaged in the same cause."

And then the great wheels turned round —the wheels that were carrying the two heroines to a terrible struggle and an

almost certain doom—the train moved out of the station into the fast-falling night, and the last John Verelst saw of Leah was her outstretched hand as it waved him a final farewell.

* * * * *

Time, the destroyer, is also Time, the healer; and, as the days and weeks sped on, Jack found that the burden of disappointment and sorrow became easier to bear. He had plenty of work, too, and occupation is a rare consoler. Busy men suffer less from grief than those who have leisure to think and time to brood. He went often to the Roths, and saw much of Helenchen. Her society always soothed him. She was so gentle and genial, and, though she could not help knowing that he grieved for Leah, showed neither jealousy nor annoyance, and always spoke of her with affection and respect. Twice

only he heard from Leah; one short letter told him of her arrival in St. Petersburg, another that she was safe and well. Then followed a long interval, an interval of nearly a year, and he had made up his mind that some harm had befallen her, and that he should never hear of her again, when there came a letter from Geneva. It was written in bad French, signed "Pierre Mentchikoff," and ran thus:—

"*You will be sorry to hear that Ida Mikailovna Volkovsky was taken two months after her return to Russia, and after being imprisoned in the House of Preventional Detention at St. Petersburg, was exiled to Eastern Siberia, and died at the first Étape beyond Tobolsk. Her friend and companion, Anna Paulovna Paskiewitch, was also taken, and imprisoned in the Alexis Ravelin of Peter and Paul. It is believed*

she also is dead, but on this point our friends have no certain information."

A few days after he had received it, Jack showed this letter to Helene.

"It is what I expected," he said. "But it is very, very sad—a nature so noble so cruelly sacrificed."

Helenchen wept.

"Her last wish was that you and I should love one another," he went on; "and though I cannot offer you my first love, I can truly say that you are very dear to me, and that you become dearer every day. If I miss seeing you for a few days I am wretched. It may seem strange that I should say this now, just when we have received news of poor Leah's death. But she had a great affection for you—"

"She was the best friend I ever had," murmured Helenchen.

"She was a true friend to us both. We have suffered a common loss; her death seems to make you still dearer to me. My sister is gone, and now I have only you. Can you, knowing what you do, take me for your betrothed and accept such love as I can give?"

"With all my heart, dear Jack," exclaimed Helenchen, smiling through her tears; "I have loved you ever since we first met, and I am yours till death do us part."

"Your love is a precious possession," said Jack, also smiling, though rather sadly; "and I will try to make myself worthy of it in the days to come. But I should be wanting in frankness—I should be doing wrong—if I led you to believe that I could ever forget Leah."

"I do not want you to forget her," returned Helene, eagerly; "it would be

wrong if you did. And I—though I was once jealous of her—shall always think of her with gratitude and affection. For is it not she who brought us together? Is it not to her devotion that I owe your love? No, dear Jack, we will never forget Leah Starkova. We will keep her ever in remembrance."

And so they have. A portrait of the noble woman who lies buried under Siberian snows occupies a place of honour in their house; and though years have gone by since these things came to pass, her memory is still enshrined in their hearts.

THE END.

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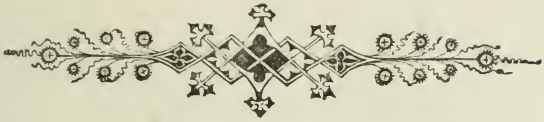

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